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CAPTAIN AMERICA

STREETS OF POISON

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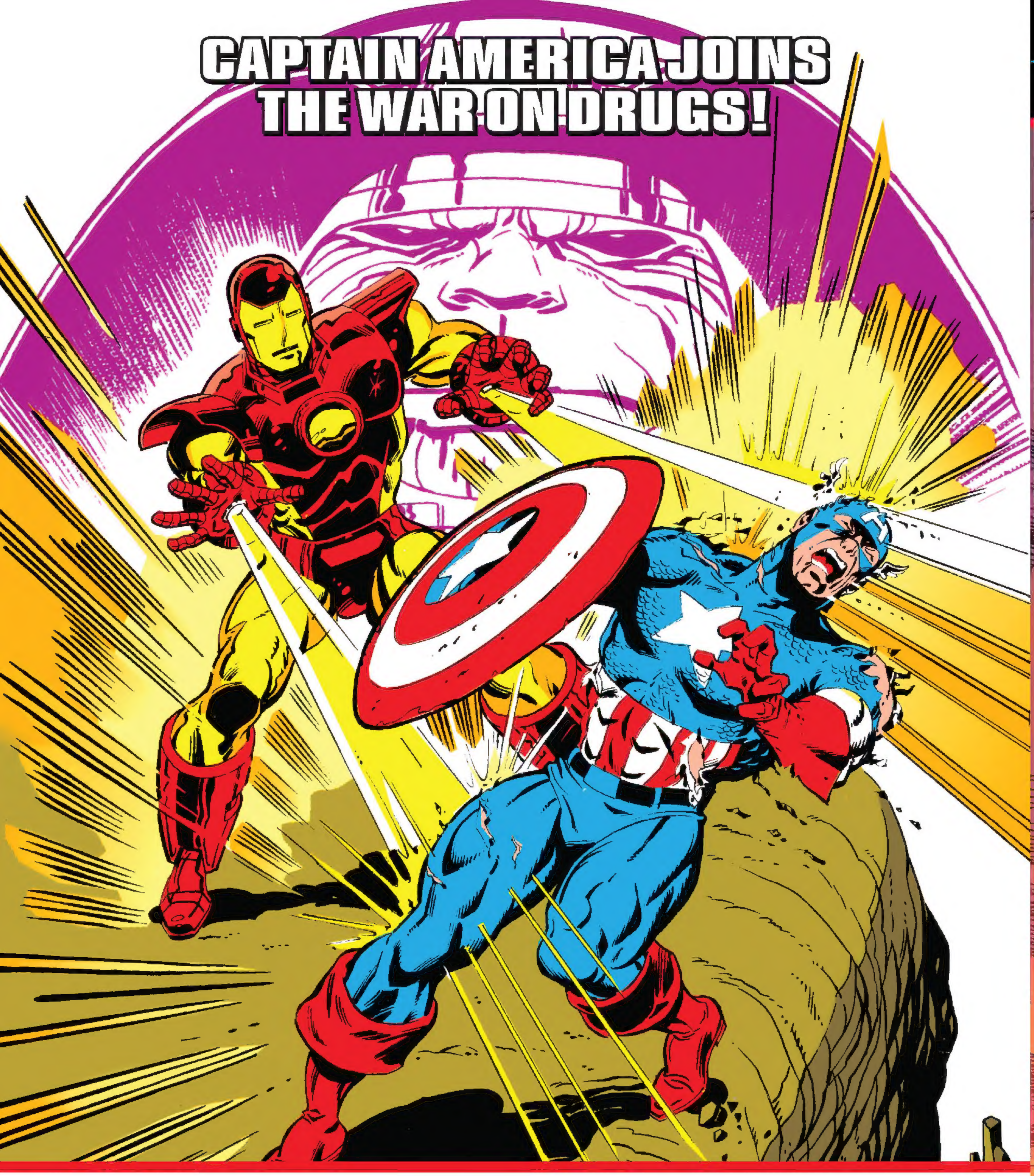

CAPTAIN AMERICA JOINS THE WAR ON DRUGS!

When Cap targets the gang that's selling the new designer narcotic Ice, he receives an accidental overdose that combines with the Super-Soldier Serum in his blood. Left permanently enraged, a volatile shield-slinger finds himself in the middle of a street war between the Red Skull and the Kingpin. With deadly villains Crossbones and Bullseye on each side, Cap will need to rely on his friends. But the Ice-induced rage is alienating him from allies like Daredevil and the Black Widow — and even his girlfriend, Diamondback. Steve must get free of the powerful drug, but it will come at a cost. Will he be fit to celebrate his 50th anniversary — or to face the Serpent Society, the Watchdogs and…Iron Man?!

VOLUME
16
1990-1991

CAPTAIN AMERICA #372-386 & ANNUAL #9-10

The Epic Collections feature the best characters and stories from Marvel's vast history. Volumes are not published in chronological order — so start your collection today with this edition, and look inside for a complete list of available and upcoming releases!

MARVEL **EPIC COLLECTION**

CAPTAIN AMERICA

STREETS OF POISON

GRUENWALD • CHICHESTER • LIM • BAGLEY • VALENTINO • MANLEY

MARVEL® ANNUAL

THE TERMINUS FACTOR

64 PAGES

$2.00/ $2.50 CAN
CAPTAIN AMERICA
9 • 1990
02561

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

PART ONE OF FIVE

CAPTAIN AMERICA®

THE TERROR BEGINS!

STAN LEE PRESENTS:

THE TERMINUS FACTOR

STAGE ONE

CAPTAIN AMERICA

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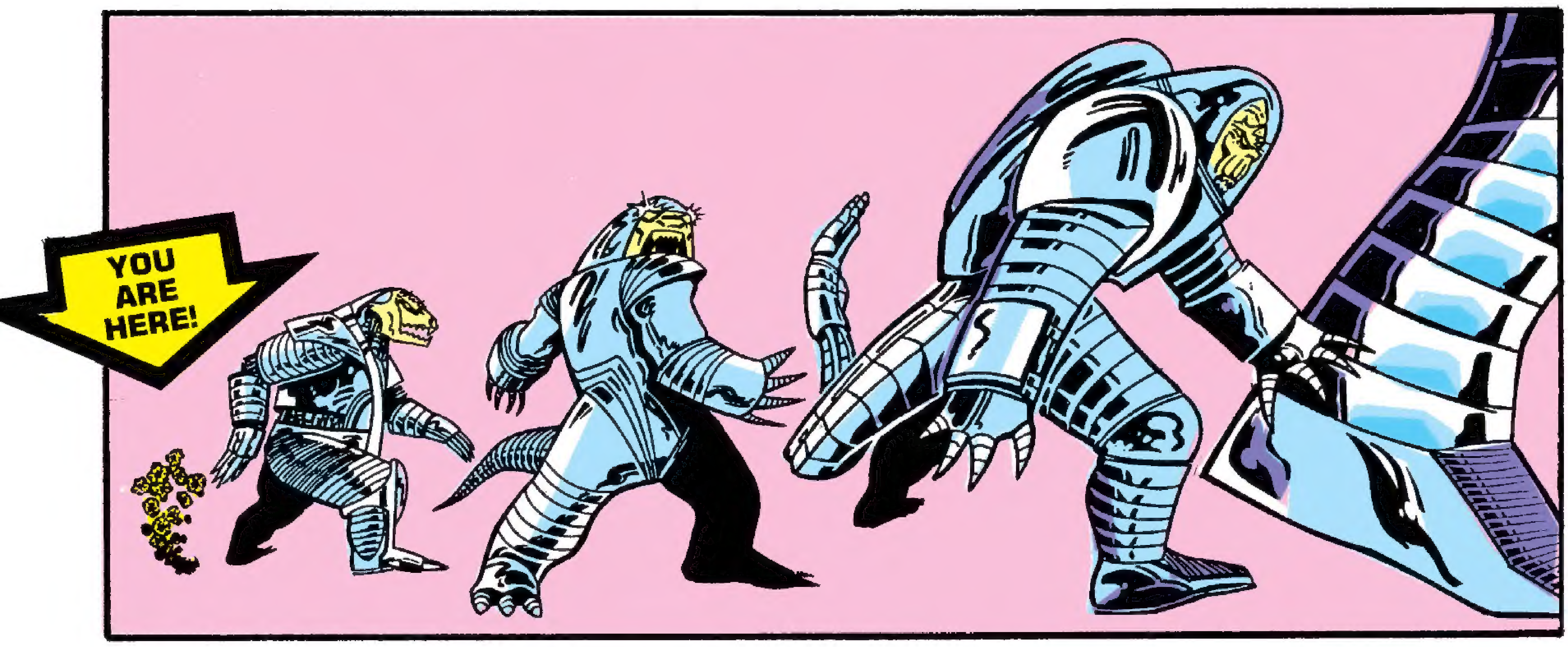
CONTENTS:

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT
by Roy Thomas, Jim Valentino and Sam De La Rosa
pg. 2

A SOLDIER'S STORY
by Randall Frenz, Mark Bagley and Mike DeCarlo
pg. 25

NOMAD in WALKING THE LINE
by Fabian Nicieza, Don Hudson and Tom Morgan
pg. 51


YOU ARE HERE!

STAGE ONE:
CAPTAIN AMERICA ANNUAL #9

STAGE TWO:
IRON MAN ANNUAL #11

STAGE THREE:
MIGHTY THOR ANNUAL #15

STAGE FOUR:
AVENGERS WEST COAST ANNUAL #5

STAGE FIVE:
AVENGERS ANNUAL #19

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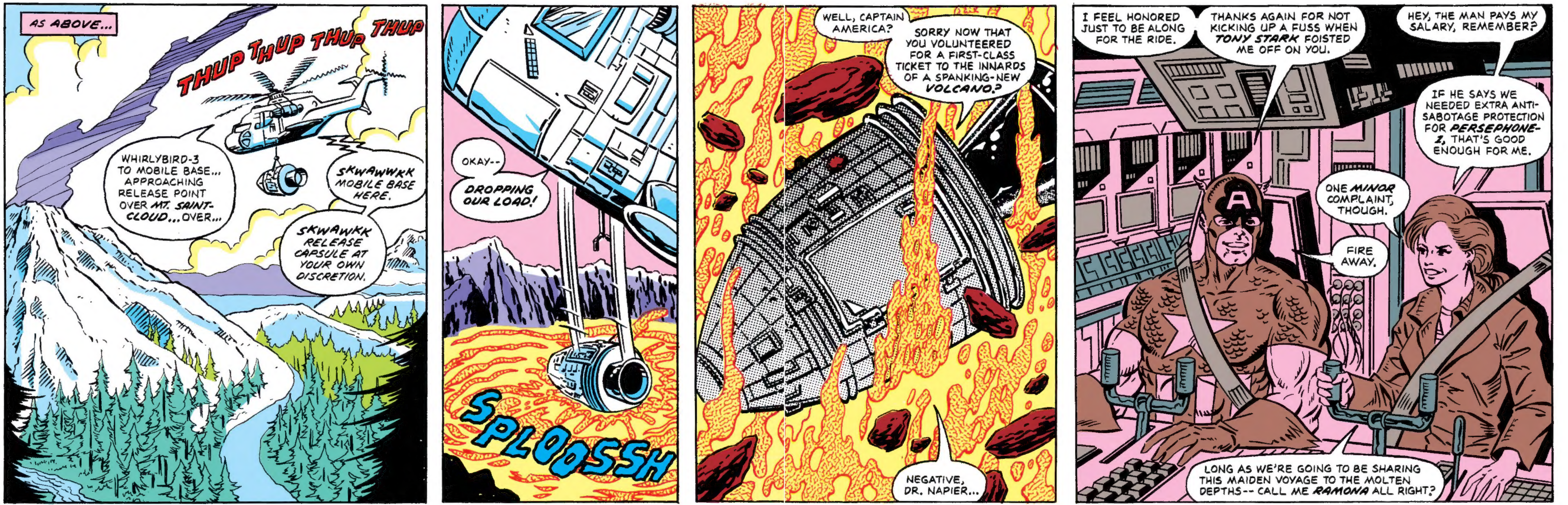
AS ABOVE...
THUP THUP THUP THUP
THUP THUP THUP
WHIRLYBIRD-3 TO MOBILE BASE... APPROACHING RELEASE POINT OVER MT. SAINT-CLOUD... OVER...
SKWAWKK MOBILE BASE HERE.
SKWAWKK RELEASE CAPSULE AT YOUR OWN DISCRETION.
OKAY-- DROPPING OUR LOAD!
SPLOOSSH
WELL, CAPTAIN AMERICA?
SORRY NOW THAT YOU VOLUNTEERED FOR A FIRST-CLASS TICKET TO THE INNARDS OF A SPANKING-NEW VOLCANO?
NEGATIVE, DR. NAPIER...
I FEEL HONORED JUST TO BE ALONG FOR THE RIDE.
THANKS AGAIN FOR NOT KICKING UP A FUSS WHEN TONY STARK FOISTED ME OFF ON YOU.
HEY, THE MAN PAYS MY SALARY, REMEMBER?
IF HE SAYS WE NEEDED EXTRA ANTI-SABOTAGE PROTECTION FOR PERSEPHONE-2, THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME.
ONE MINOR COMPLAINT, THOUGH.
FIRE AWAY.
LONG AS WE'RE GOING TO BE SHARING THIS MAIDEN VOYAGE TO THE MOLTEN DEPTHS-- CALL ME RAMONA ALL RIGHT?

STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE

TERMINUS FACTOR

PART I

YOU *ARE* WHAT YOU EAT

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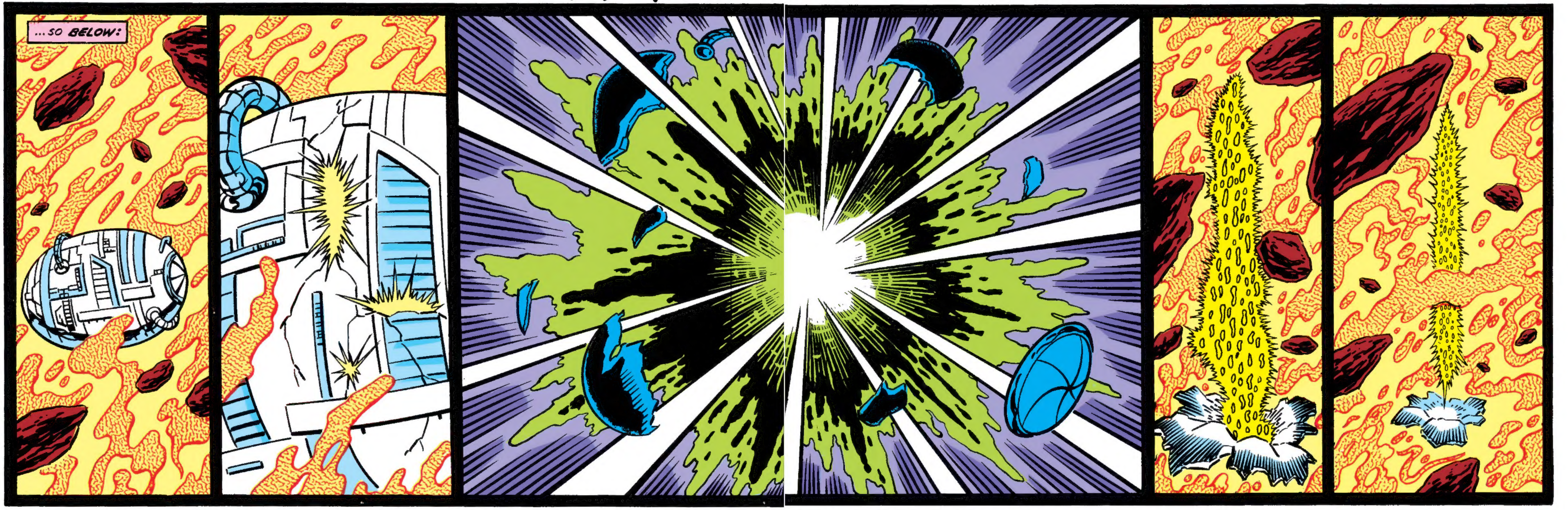
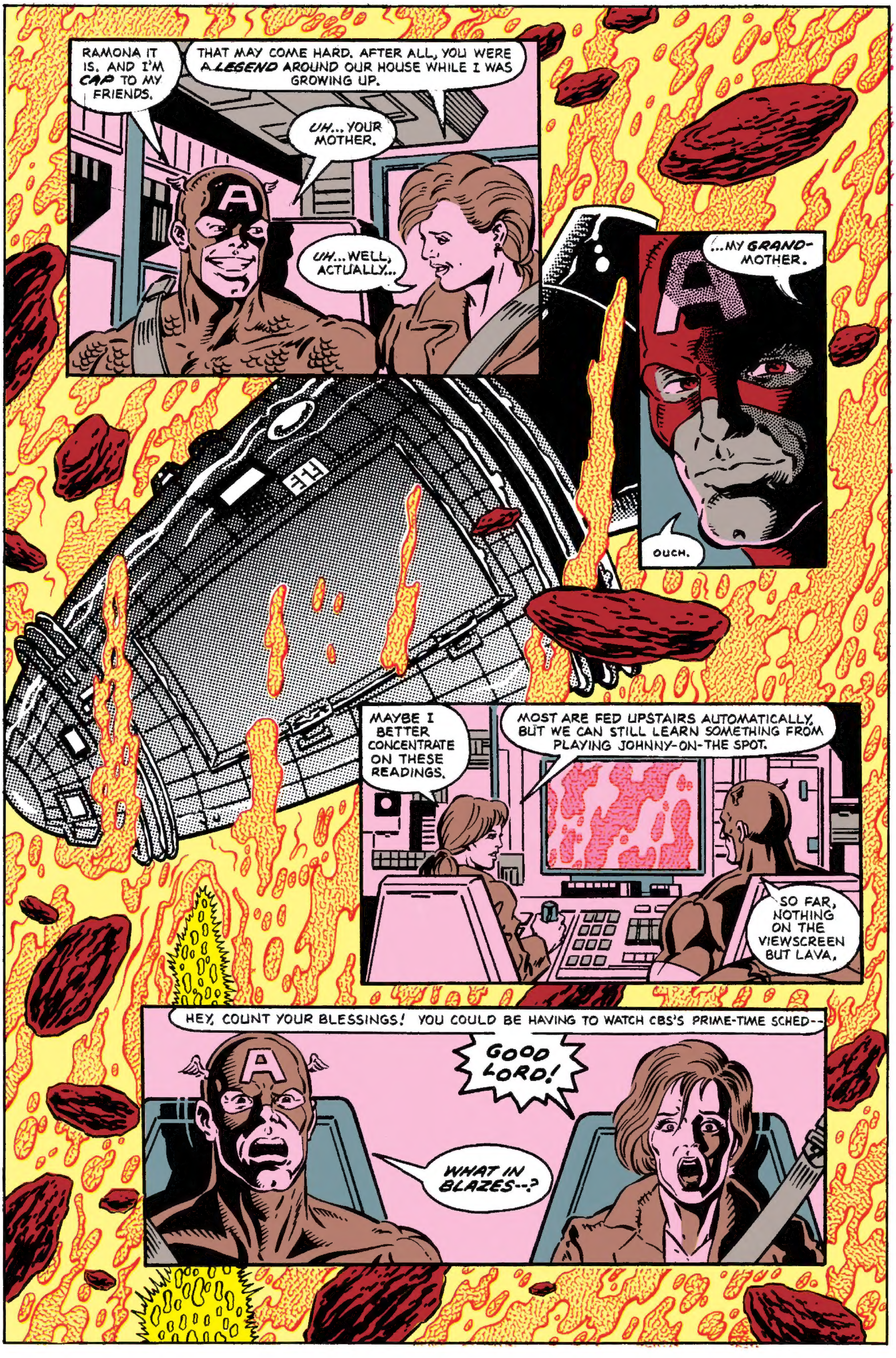
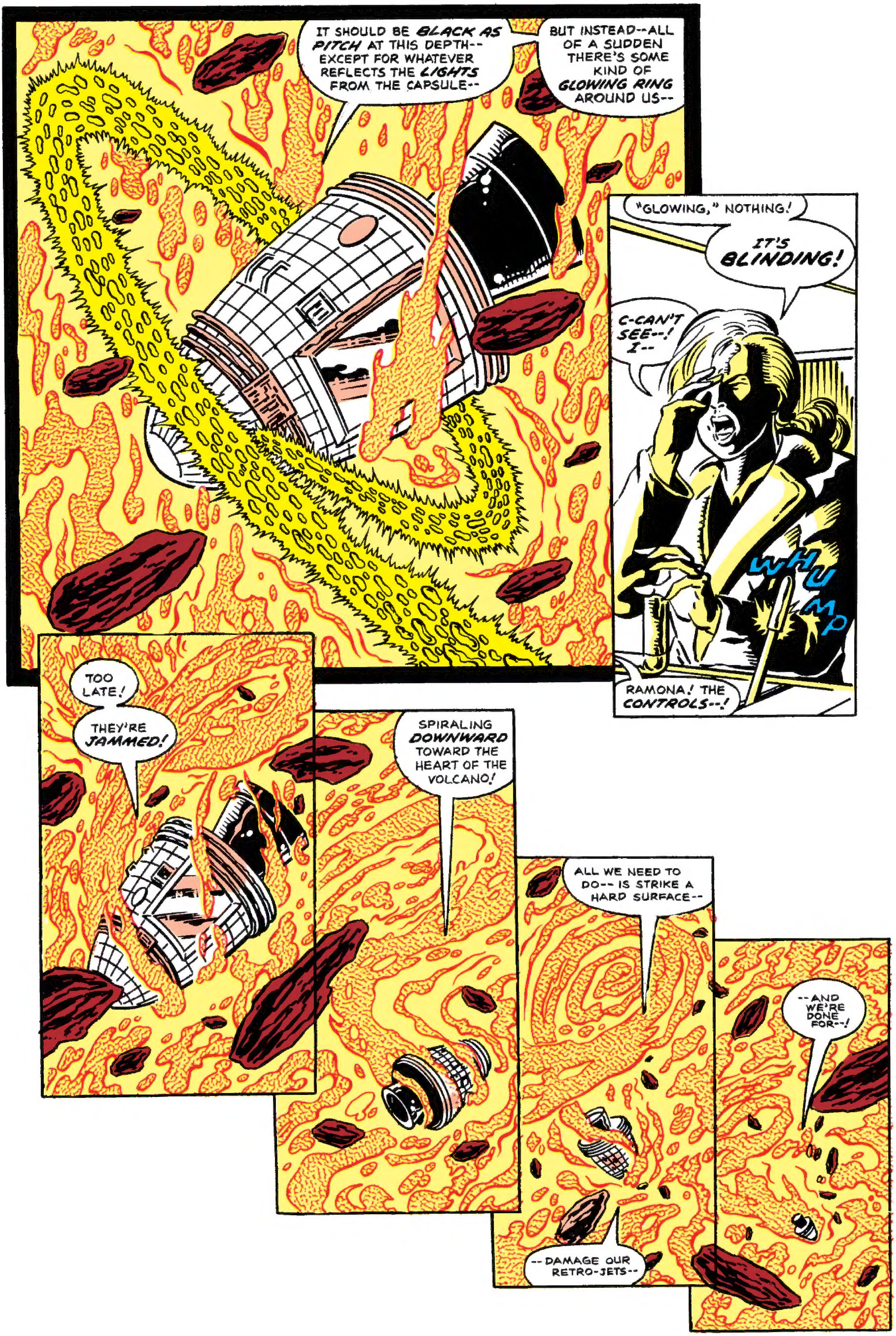
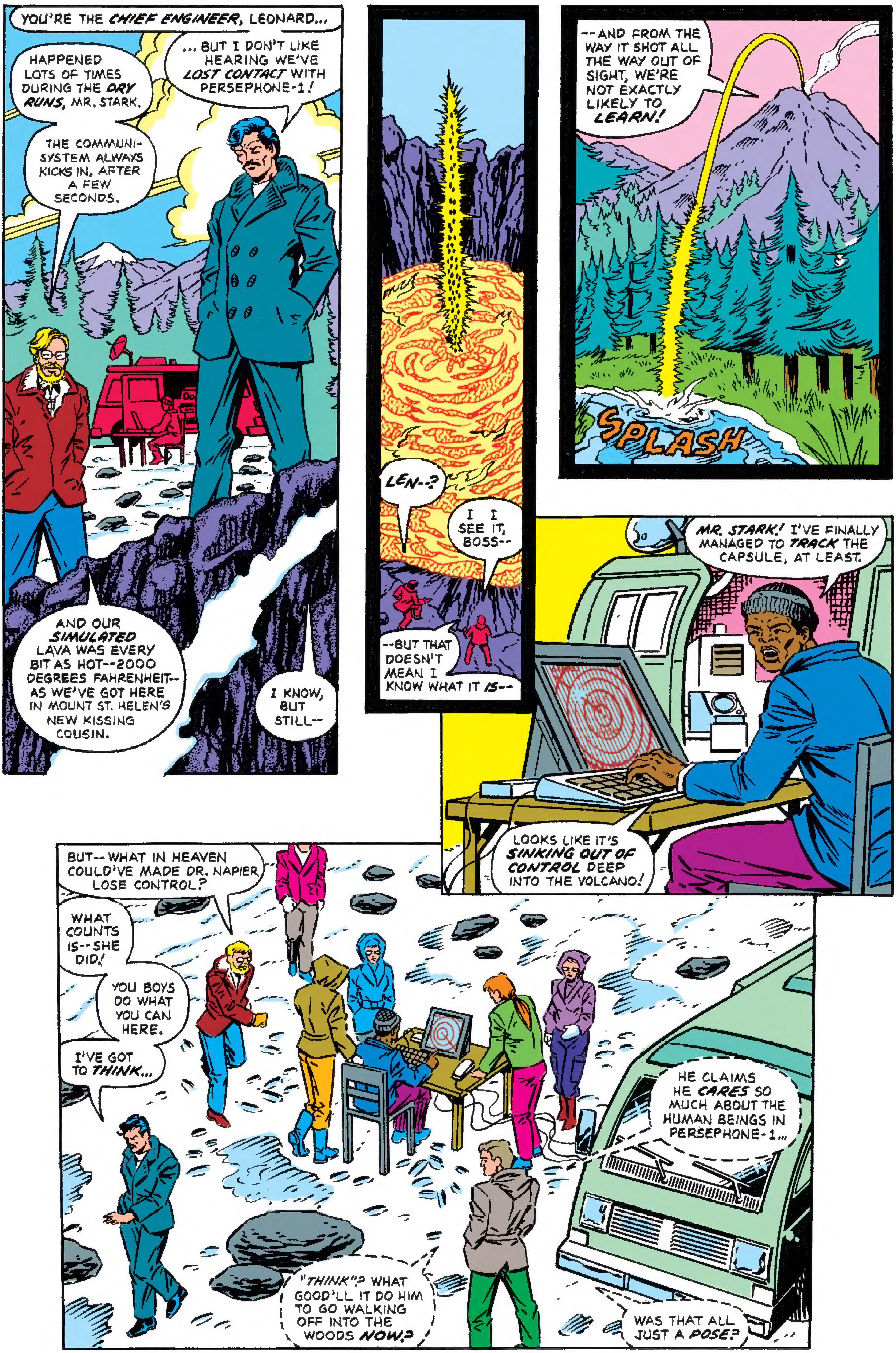
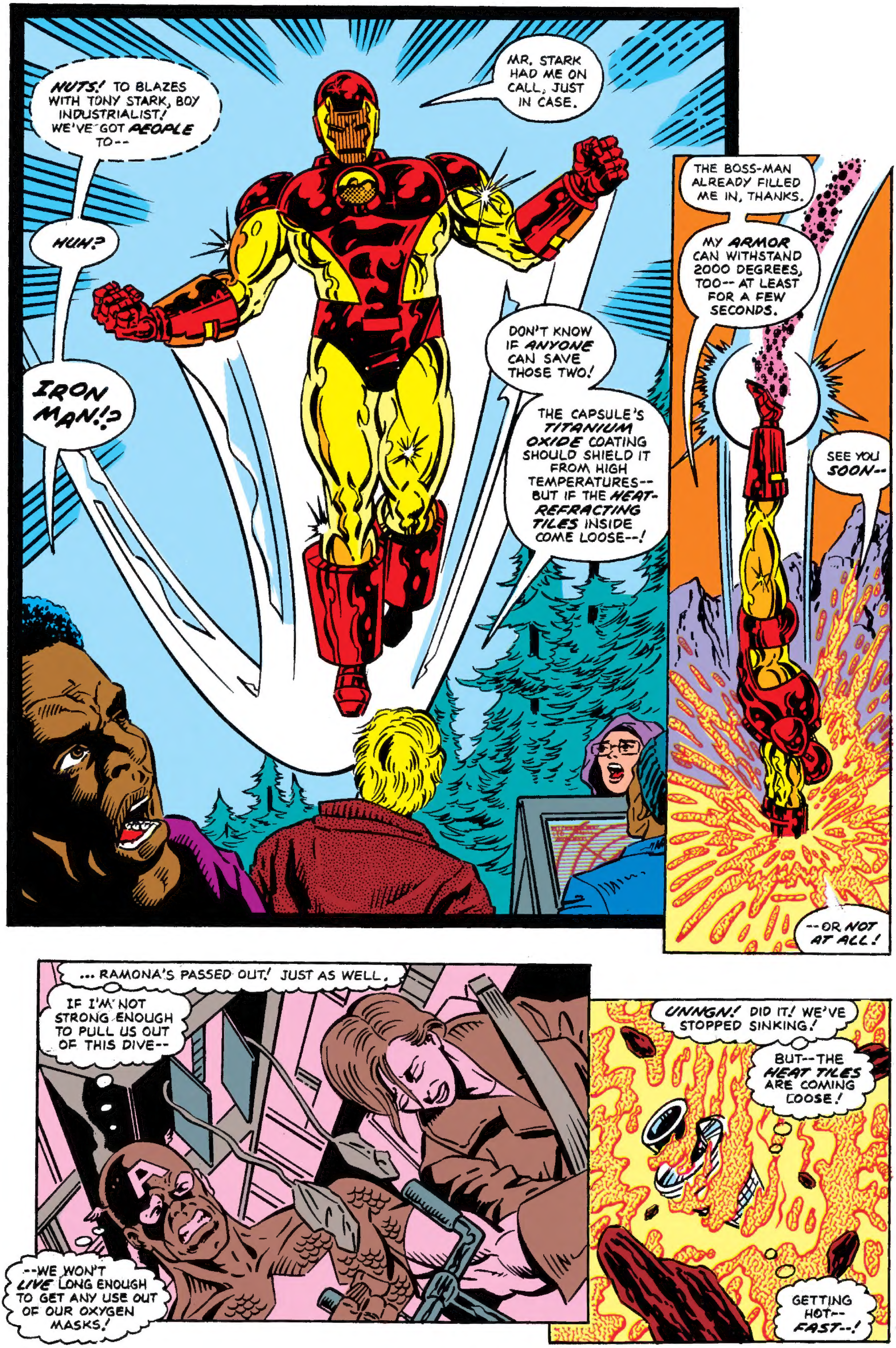
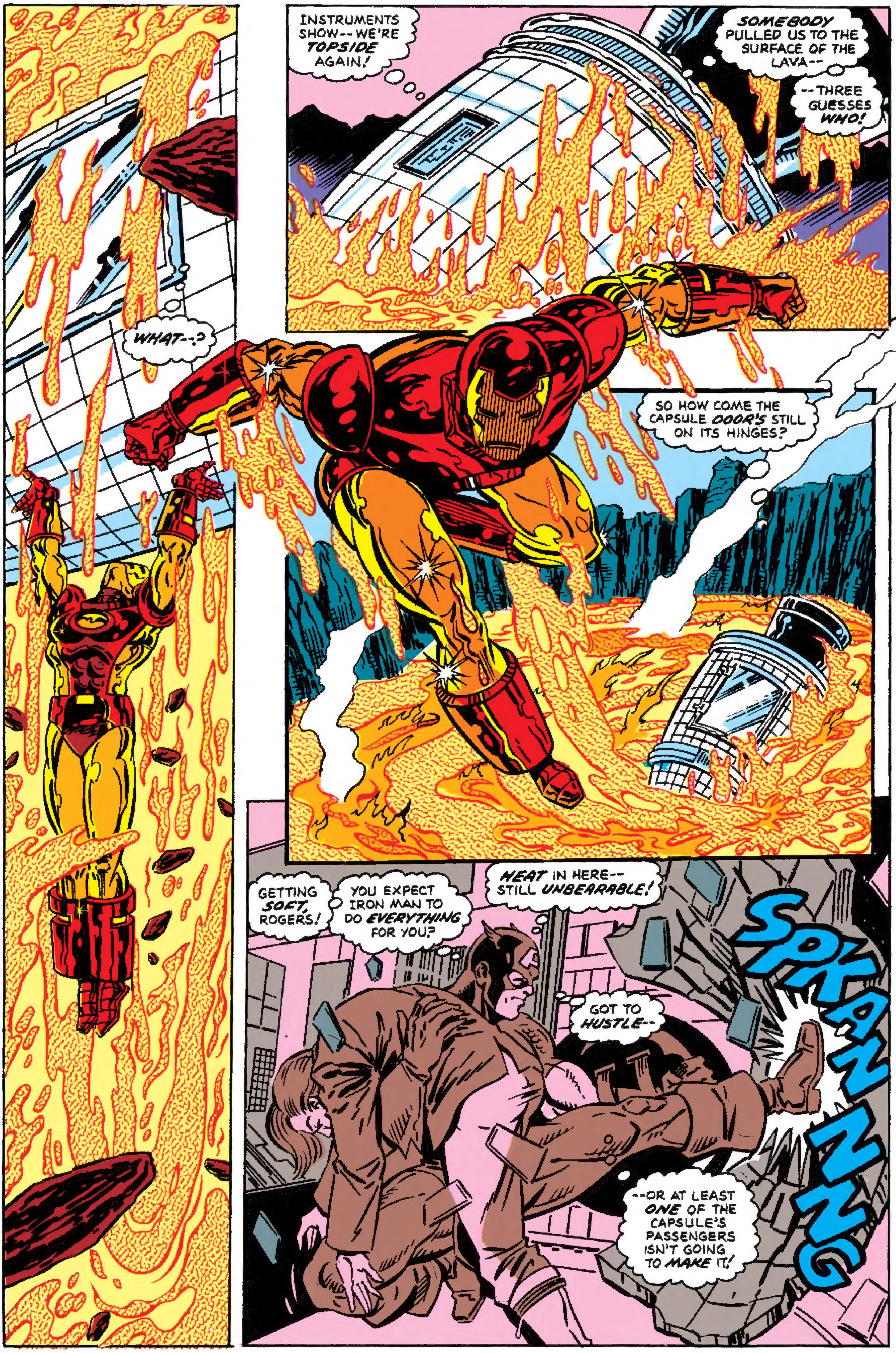


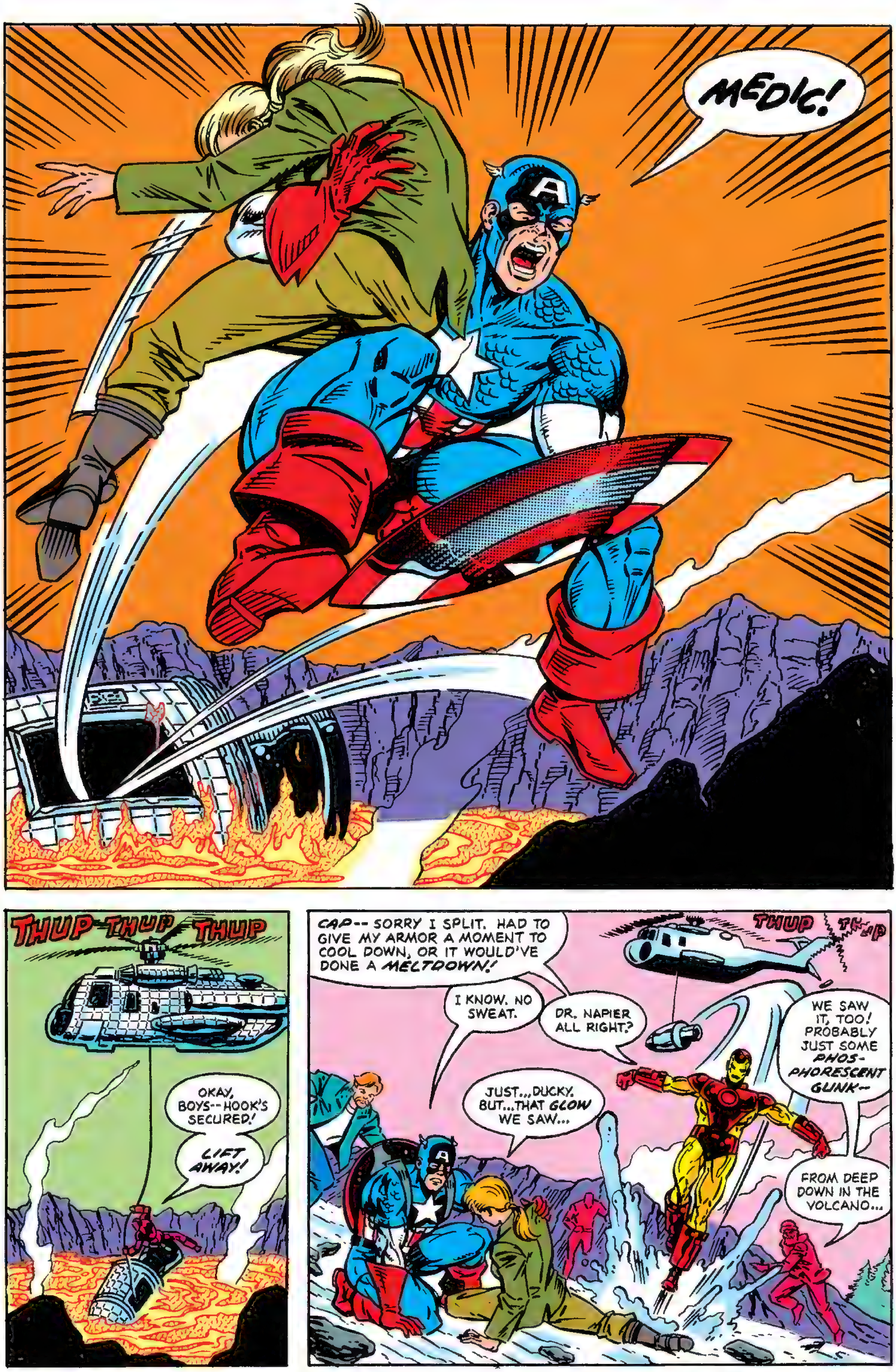

RAMONA IT IS. AND I'M *CAP* TO MY FRIENDS.
THAT MAY COME HARD. AFTER ALL, YOU WERE A *LEGEND* AROUND OUR HOUSE WHILE I WAS GROWING UP.
UH... YOUR MOTHER.
UH... WELL, ACTUALLY...
...MY *GRAND*-MOTHER.
OUCH.
MAYBE I BETTER CONCENTRATE ON THESE READINGS.
MOST ARE FED UPSTAIRS AUTOMATICALLY, BUT WE CAN STILL LEARN SOMETHING FROM PLAYING JOHNNY-ON-THE SPOT.
SO FAR, NOTHING ON THE VIEWSCREEN BUT LAVA.
HEY, COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS! YOU COULD BE HAVING TO WATCH CBS'S PRIME-TIME SCHED--
GOOD LORD!
WHAT IN BLAZES--?

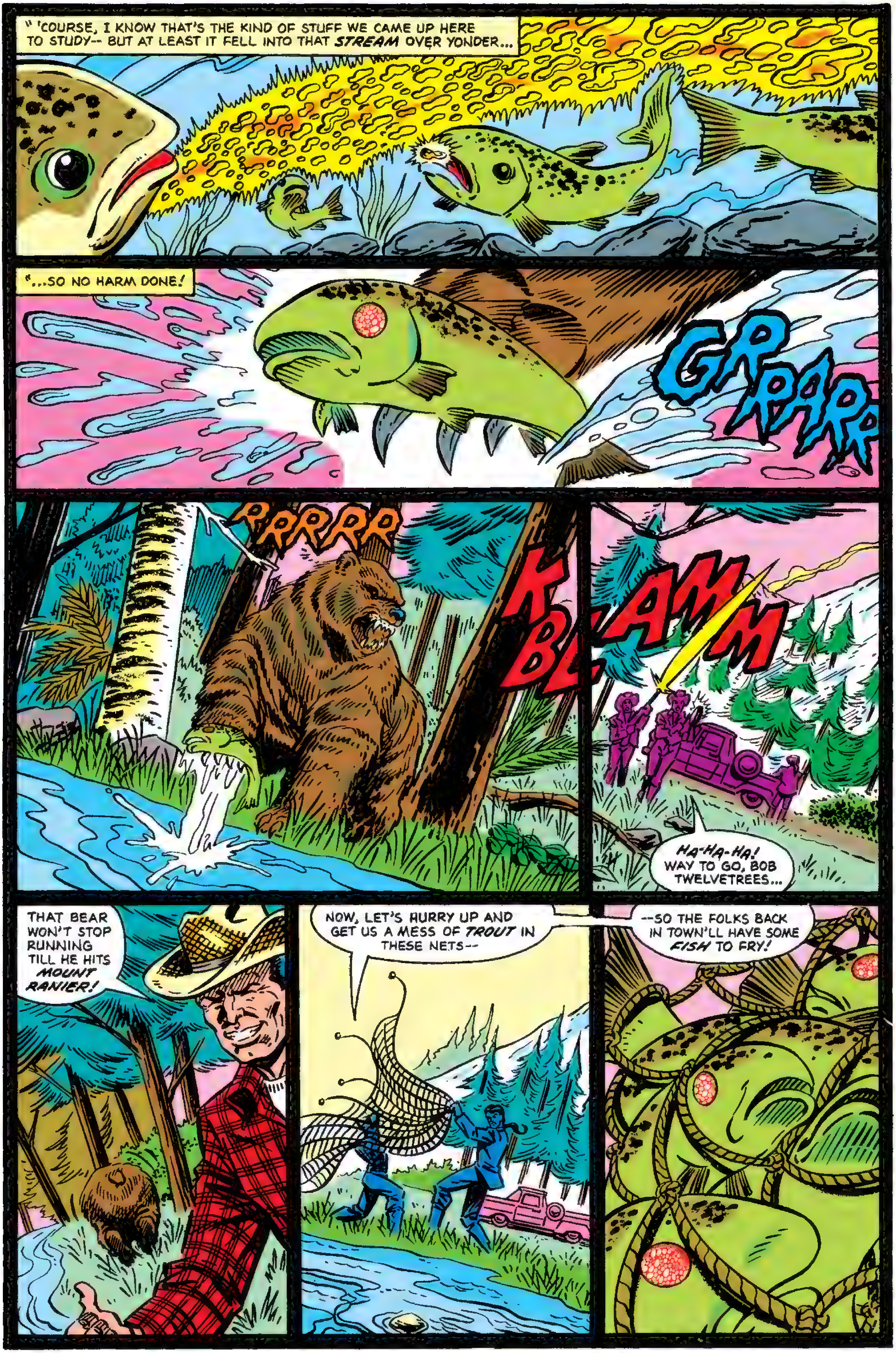

IT SHOULD BE BLACK AS PITCH AT THIS DEPTH-- EXCEPT FOR WHATEVER REFLECTS THE LIGHTS FROM THE CAPSULE--
BUT INSTEAD--ALL OF A SUDDEN THERE'S SOME KIND OF GLOWING RING AROUND US--
"GLOWING," NOTHING!
IT'S BLINDING!
C-CAN'T SEE--! I--
WHUMP
RAMONA! THE CONTROLS--!
TOO LATE!
THEY'RE JAMMED!
SPIRALING DOWNWARD TOWARD THE HEART OF THE VOLCANO!
ALL WE NEED TO DO-- IS STRIKE A HARD SURFACE--
--DAMAGE OUR RETRO-JETS--
--AND WE'RE DONE FOR--!

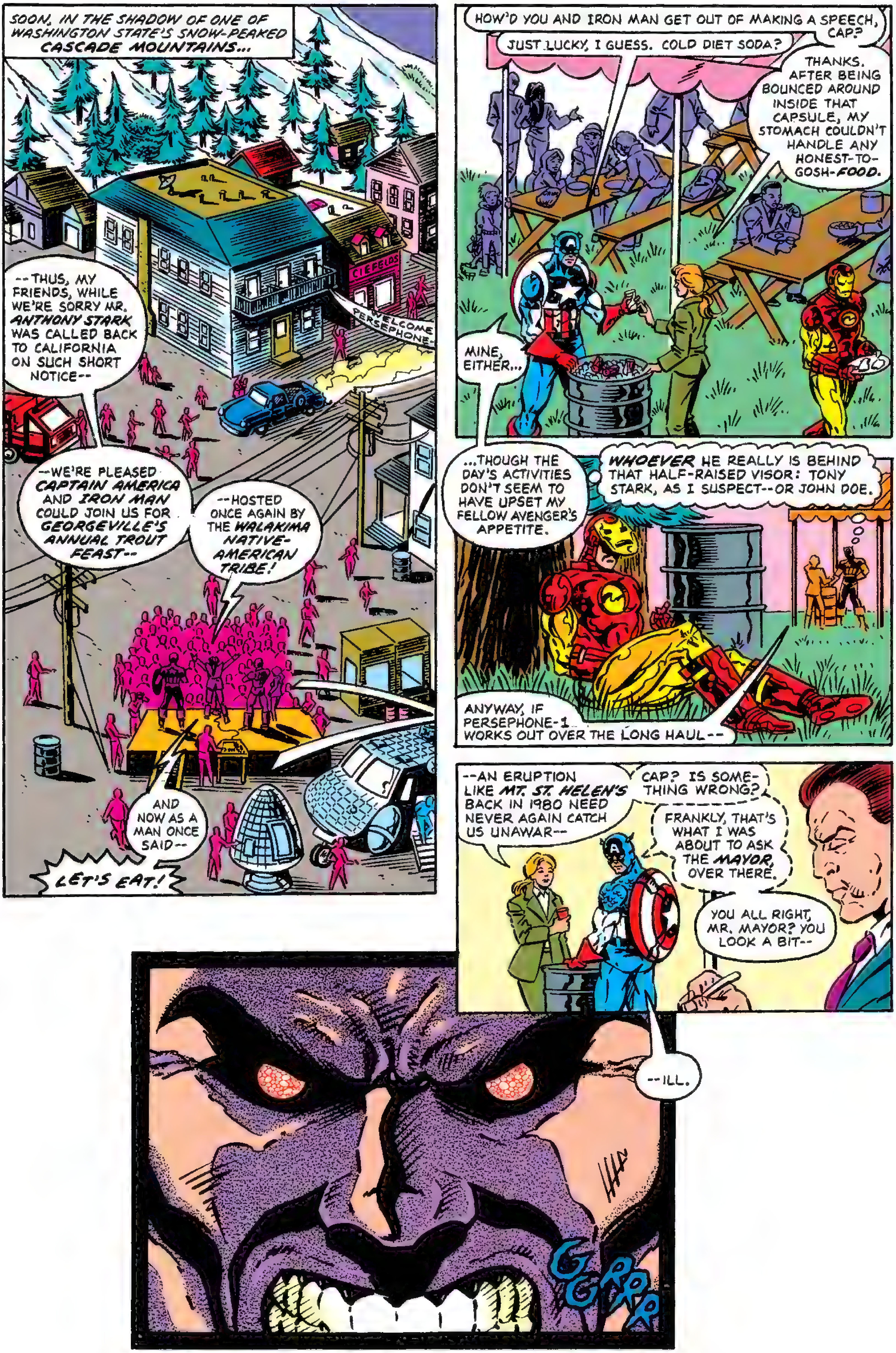

YOU'RE THE *CHIEF ENGINEER*, LEONARD...
...BUT I DON'T LIKE HEARING WE'VE *LOST CONTACT* WITH PERSEPHONE-1!
HAPPENED LOTS OF TIMES DURING THE *DRY RUNS*, MR. STARK.
THE COMMUNI-SYSTEM ALWAYS KICKS IN, AFTER A FEW SECONDS.
AND OUR *SIMULATED* LAVA WAS EVERY BIT AS HOT--2000 DEGREES FAHRENHEIT--AS WE'VE GOT HERE IN MOUNT ST. HELEN'S NEW KISSING COUSIN.
I KNOW, BUT STILL--
LEN--?
I I SEE IT, BOSS--
--BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN I KNOW WHAT IT *IS*--
--AND FROM THE WAY IT SHOT ALL THE WAY OUT OF SIGHT, WE'RE NOT EXACTLY LIKELY TO *LEARN!*
SPLASH
MR. STARK! I'VE FINALLY MANAGED TO *TRACK* THE CAPSULE, AT LEAST.
LOOKS LIKE IT'S *SINKING OUT OF CONTROL* DEEP INTO THE VOLCANO!
BUT--WHAT IN HEAVEN COULD'VE MADE DR. NAPIER LOSE CONTROL?
WHAT COUNTS IS--SHE DID!
YOU BOYS DO WHAT YOU CAN HERE.
I'VE GOT TO *THINK*...
HE CLAIMS HE *CARES* SO MUCH ABOUT THE HUMAN BEINGS IN PERSEPHONE-1...
"*THINK*"? WHAT GOOD'LL IT DO HIM TO GO WALKING OFF INTO THE WOODS *NOW?*
WAS THAT ALL JUST A *POSE?*

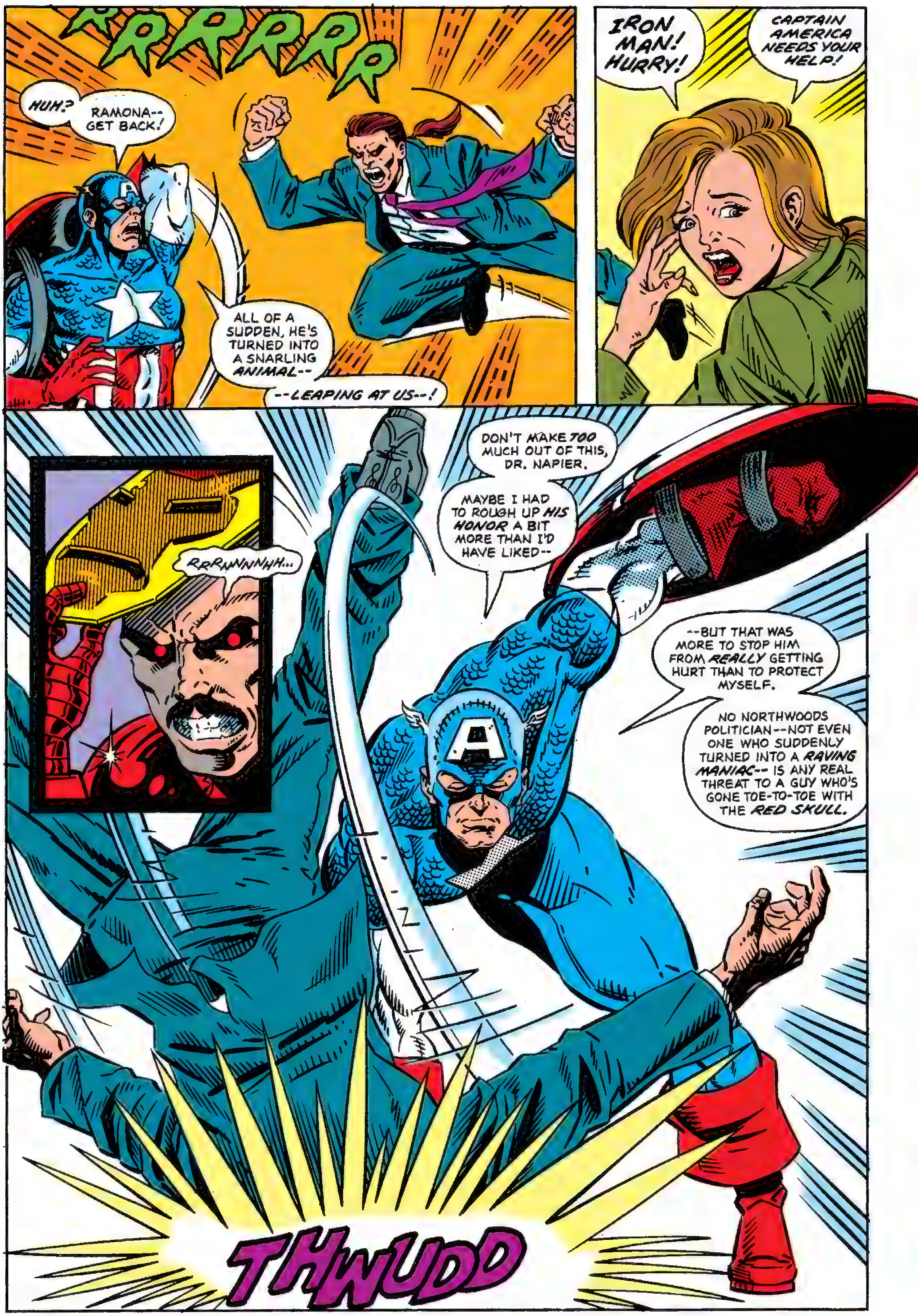

NUTS! TO BLAZES WITH TONY STARK, BOY INDUSTRIALIST! WE'VE GOT PEOPLE TO--
HUH?
IRON MAN!?
MR. STARK HAD ME ON CALL, JUST IN CASE.
DON'T KNOW IF ANYONE CAN SAVE THOSE TWO!
THE CAPSULE'S TITANIUM OXIDE COATING SHOULD SHIELD IT FROM HIGH TEMPERATURES--BUT IF THE HEAT-REFRACTING TILES INSIDE COME LOOSE--!
THE BOSS-MAN ALREADY FILLED ME IN, THANKS.
MY ARMOR CAN WITHSTAND 2000 DEGREES, TOO-- AT LEAST FOR A FEW SECONDS.
SEE YOU SOON--
--OR NOT AT ALL!
... RAMONA'S PASSED OUT! JUST AS WELL.
IF I'M NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO PULL US OUT OF THIS DIVE--
--WE WON'T LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO GET ANY USE OUT OF OUR OXYGEN MASKS!
UNNGN! DID IT! WE'VE STOPPED SINKING!
BUT--THE HEAT TILES ARE COMING LOOSE!
GETTING HOT-- FAST--!

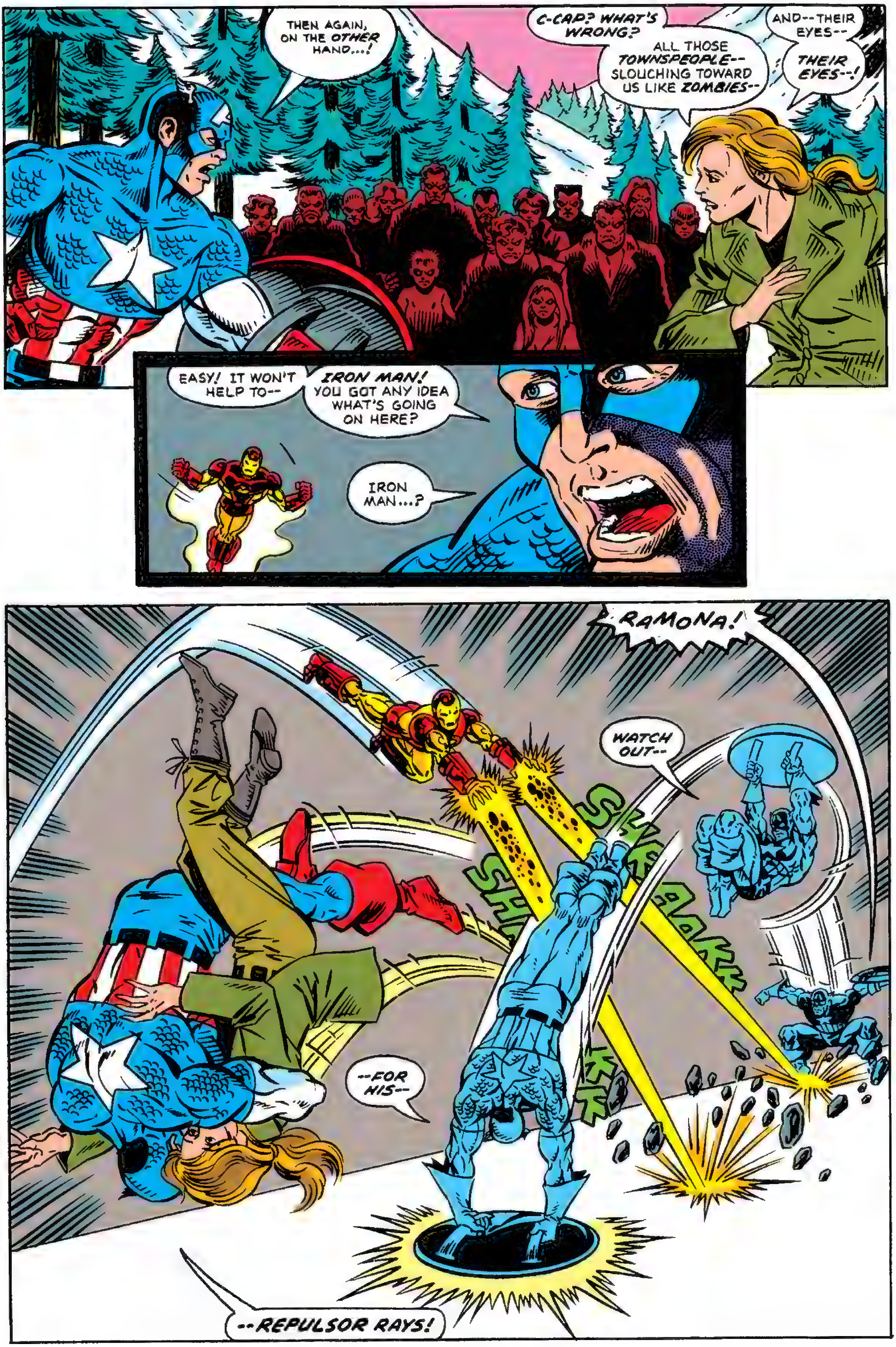

WHAT--?
INSTRUMENTS SHOW--WE'RE TOPSIDE AGAIN!
SOMEBODY PULLED US TO THE SURFACE OF THE LAVA--
--THREE GUESSES WHO!
SO HOW COME THE CAPSULE DOOR'S STILL ON ITS HINGES?
GETTING SOFT, ROGERS!
YOU EXPECT IRON MAN TO DO EVERYTHING FOR YOU?
HEAT IN HERE-- STILL UNBEARABLE!
SPKANNNG
GOT TO HUSTLE--
--OR AT LEAST ONE OF THE CAPSULE'S PASSENGERS ISN'T GOING TO MAKE IT!

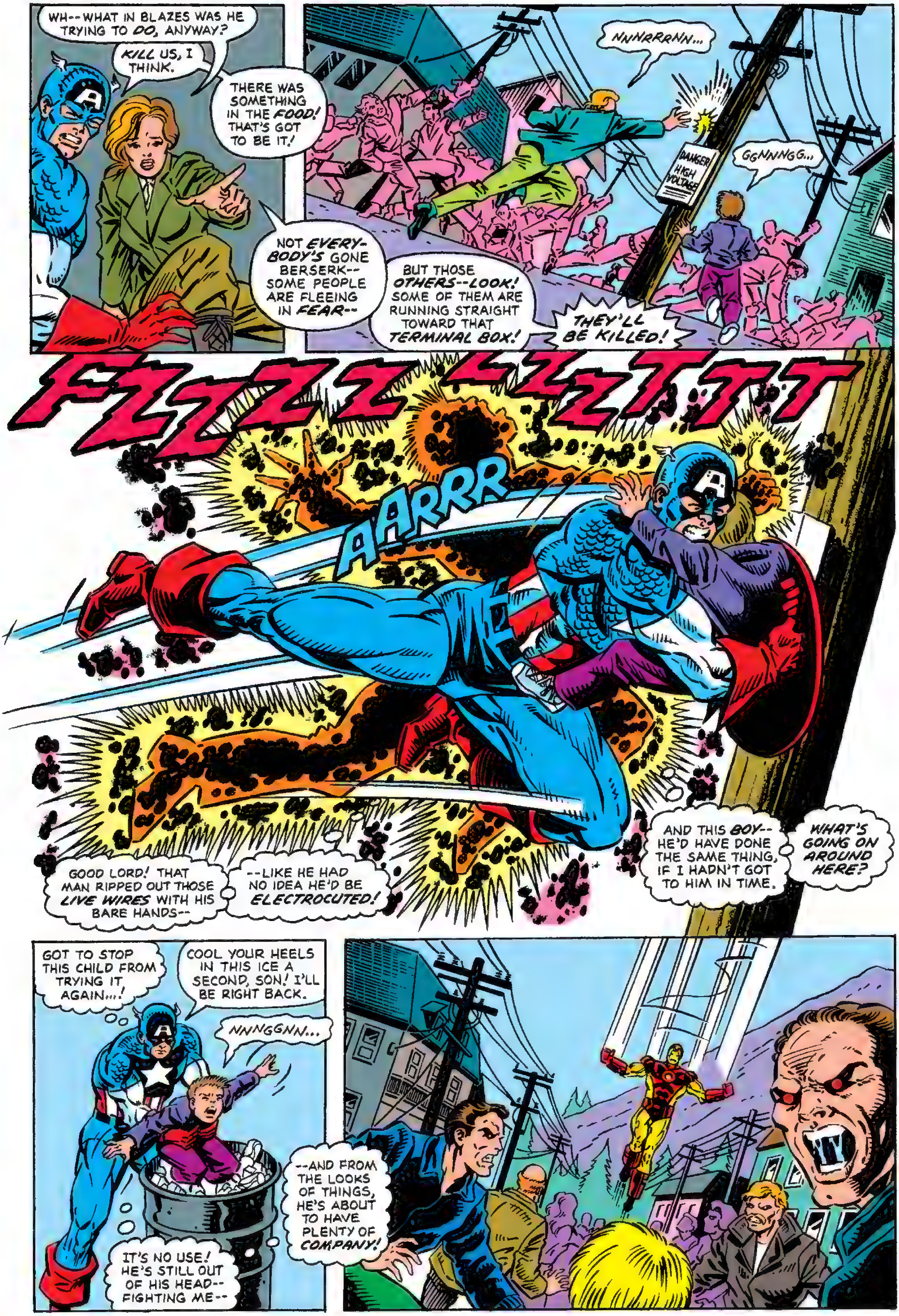

MEDIC!
THUP THUP THUP
OKAY, BOYS--HOOK'S SECURED!
LIFT AWAY!
THUP THUP
CAP-- SORRY I SPLIT. HAD TO GIVE MY ARMOR A MOMENT TO COOL DOWN, OR IT WOULD'VE DONE A *MELTDOWN!*
I KNOW. NO SWEAT.
DR. NAPIER ALL RIGHT?
JUST...DUCKY. BUT...THAT *GLOW* WE SAW...
WE SAW IT, TOO! PROBABLY JUST SOME *PHOSPHORESCENT GUNK--*
FROM DEEP DOWN IN THE VOLCANO...

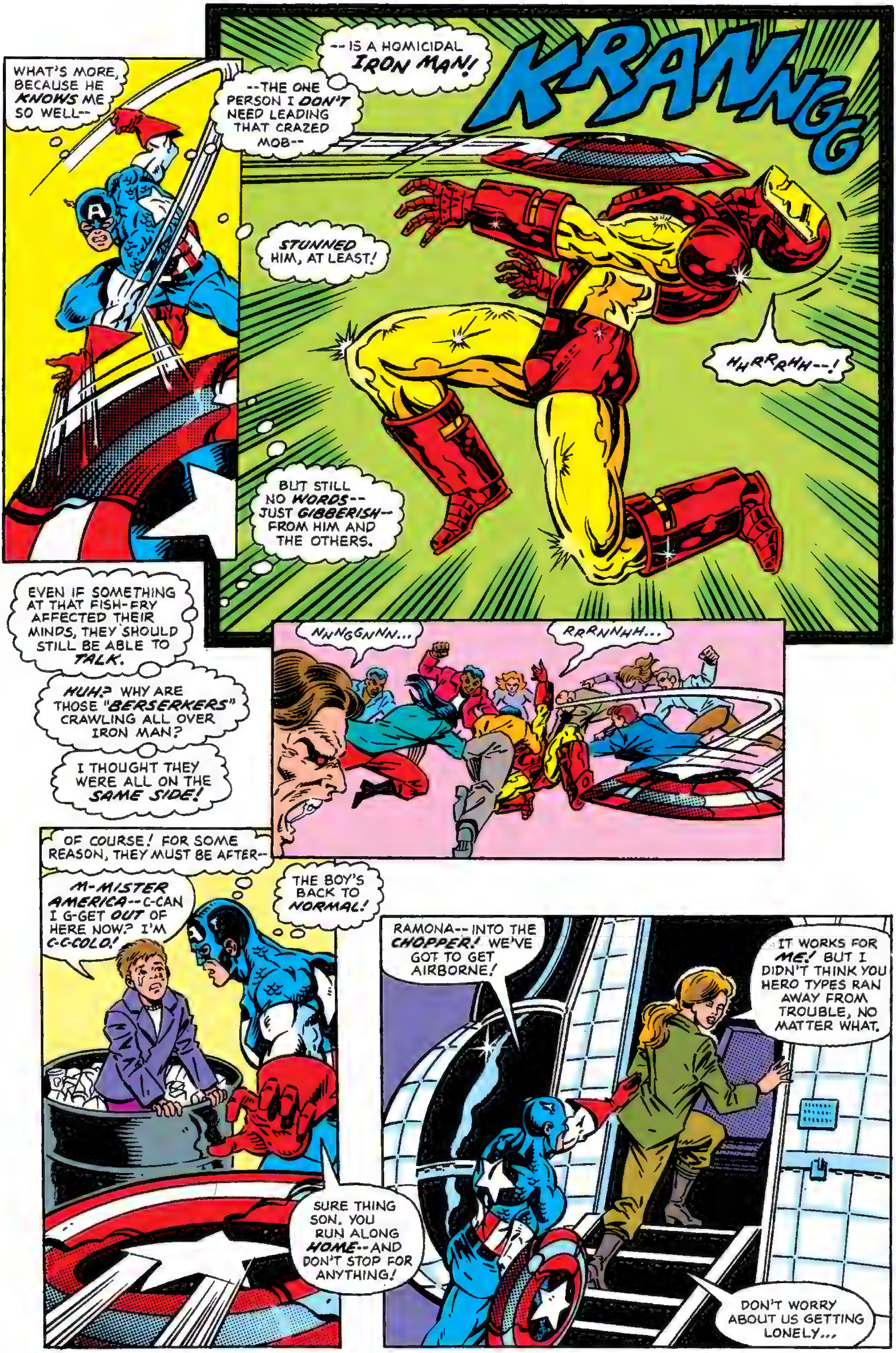

" 'COURSE, I KNOW THAT'S THE KIND OF STUFF WE CAME UP HERE TO STUDY-- BUT AT LEAST IT FELL INTO THAT *STREAM* OVER YONDER...
"...SO NO HARM DONE!
GRRARR
RRRRR
KBLAMM
HA-HA-HA! WAY TO GO, BOB TWELVETREES...
THAT BEAR WON'T STOP RUNNING TILL HE HITS *MOUNT RANIER!*
NOW, LET'S HURRY UP AND GET US A MESS OF *TROUT* IN THESE NETS--
--SO THE FOLKS BACK IN TOWN'LL HAVE SOME *FISH* TO FRY!


SOON, IN THE SHADOW OF ONE OF WASHINGTON STATE'S SNOW-PEAKED CASCADE MOUNTAINS...
CIEPELOS
WELCOME PERSEPHONE-
--THUS, MY FRIENDS, WHILE WE'RE SORRY MR. ANTHONY STARK WAS CALLED BACK TO CALIFORNIA ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE--
--WE'RE PLEASED CAPTAIN AMERICA AND IRON MAN COULD JOIN US FOR GEORGEVILLE'S ANNUAL TROUT FEAST--
--HOSTED ONCE AGAIN BY THE WALAKIMA NATIVE-AMERICAN TRIBE!
AND NOW AS A MAN ONCE SAID--
LET'S EAT!
HOW'D YOU AND IRON MAN GET OUT OF MAKING A SPEECH, CAP?
JUST LUCKY, I GUESS. COLD DIET SODA?
THANKS. AFTER BEING BOUNCED AROUND INSIDE THAT CAPSULE, MY STOMACH COULDN'T HANDLE ANY HONEST-TO-GOSH-FOOD.
MINE, EITHER...
...THOUGH THE DAY'S ACTIVITIES DON'T SEEM TO HAVE UPSET MY FELLOW AVENGER'S APPETITE.
WHOEVER HE REALLY IS BEHIND THAT HALF-RAISED VISOR: TONY STARK, AS I SUSPECT--OR JOHN DOE.
ANYWAY, IF PERSEPHONE-1 WORKS OUT OVER THE LONG HAUL--
--AN ERUPTION LIKE MT. ST. HELEN'S BACK IN 1980 NEED NEVER AGAIN CATCH US UNAWAR--
CAP? IS SOMETHING WRONG?
FRANKLY, THAT'S WHAT I WAS ABOUT TO ASK THE MAYOR, OVER THERE.
YOU ALL RIGHT, MR. MAYOR? YOU LOOK A BIT--
--ILL.
GGRRR

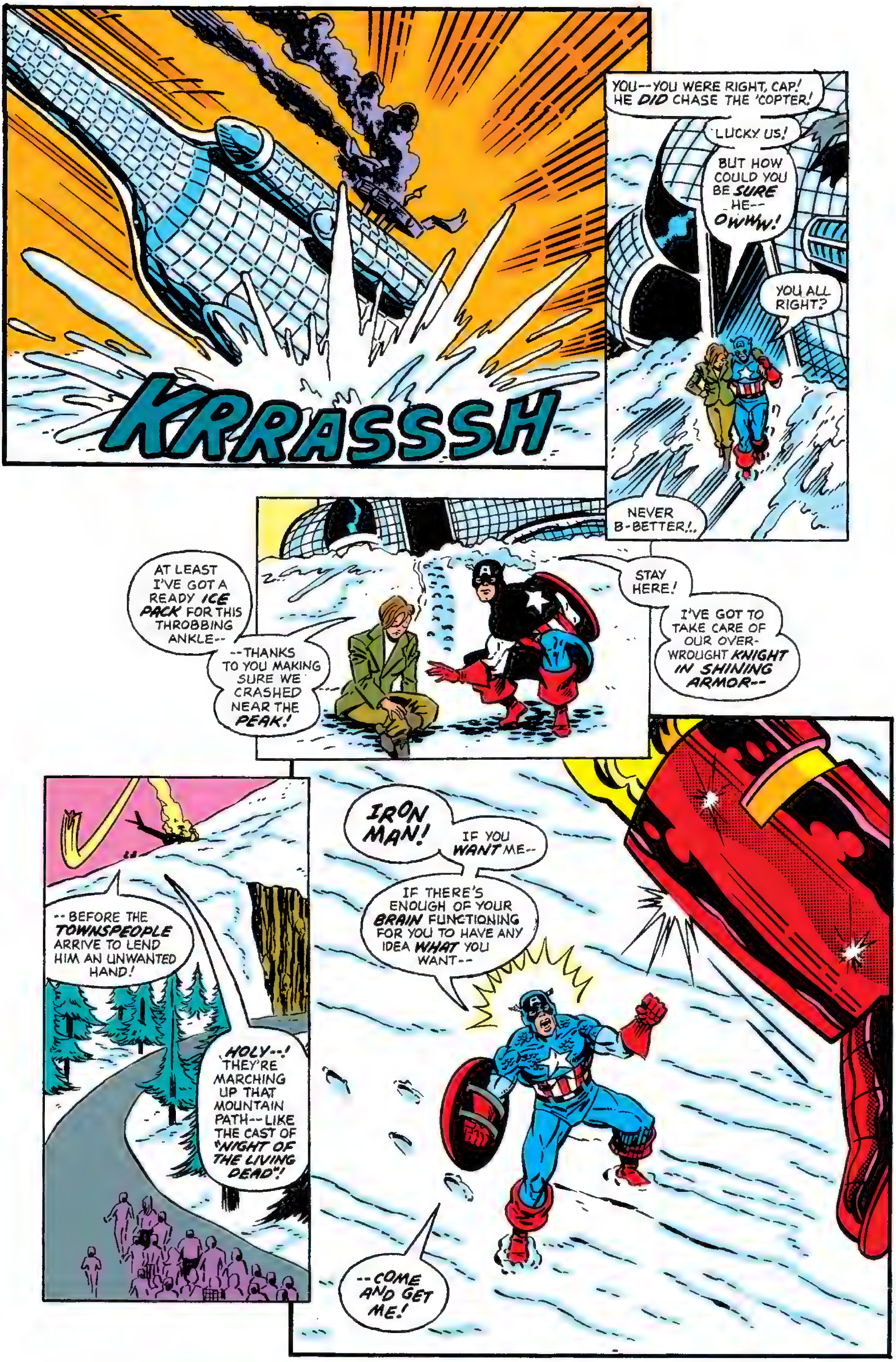

RRRRRRR
HUH?
RAMONA-- GET BACK!
ALL OF A SUDDEN, HE'S TURNED INTO A SNARLING ANIMAL--
--LEAPING AT US--!
IRON MAN! HURRY!
CAPTAIN AMERICA NEEDS YOUR HELP!
RRRNNNNHH...
DON'T MAKE TOO MUCH OUT OF THIS, DR. NAPIER.
MAYBE I HAD TO ROUGH UP HIS HONOR A BIT MORE THAN I'D HAVE LIKED--
--BUT THAT WAS MORE TO STOP HIM FROM REALLY GETTING HURT THAN TO PROTECT MYSELF.
NO NORTHWOODS POLITICIAN--NOT EVEN ONE WHO SUDDENLY TURNED INTO A RAVING MANIAC-- IS ANY REAL THREAT TO A GUY WHO'S GONE TOE-TO-TOE WITH THE RED SKULL.
THWUDD

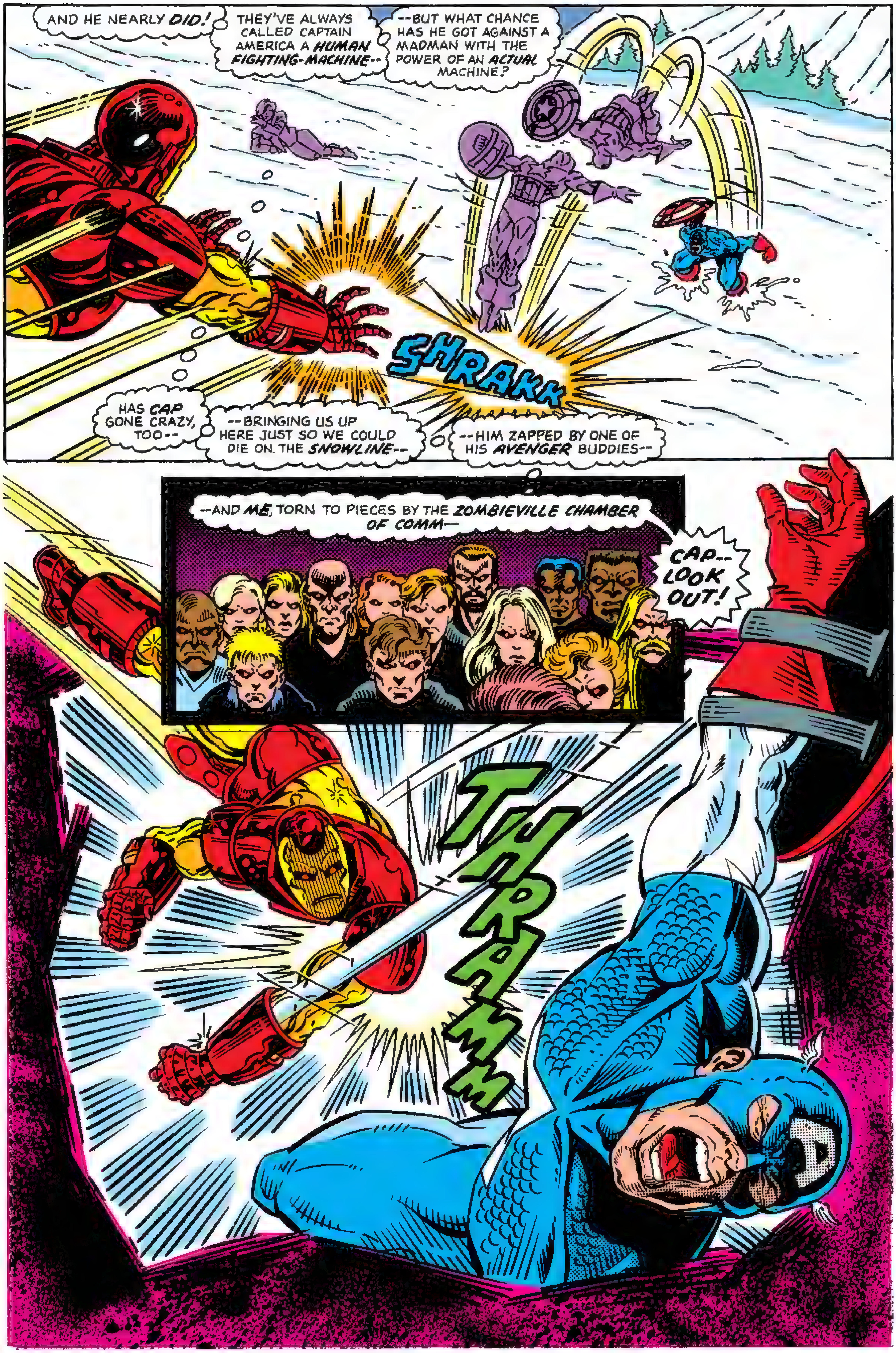

THEN AGAIN, ON THE *OTHER* HAND...!
C-CAP? WHAT'S WRONG?
ALL THOSE *TOWNSPEOPLE*-- SLOUCHING TOWARD US LIKE *ZOMBIES*--
AND--THEIR EYES--
THEIR EYES--!
EASY! IT WON'T HELP TO--
IRON MAN! YOU GOT ANY IDEA WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
IRON MAN...?
RAMONA!
WATCH OUT--
--FOR HIS--
SHAKK
SHAAKK
--REPULSOR RAYS!

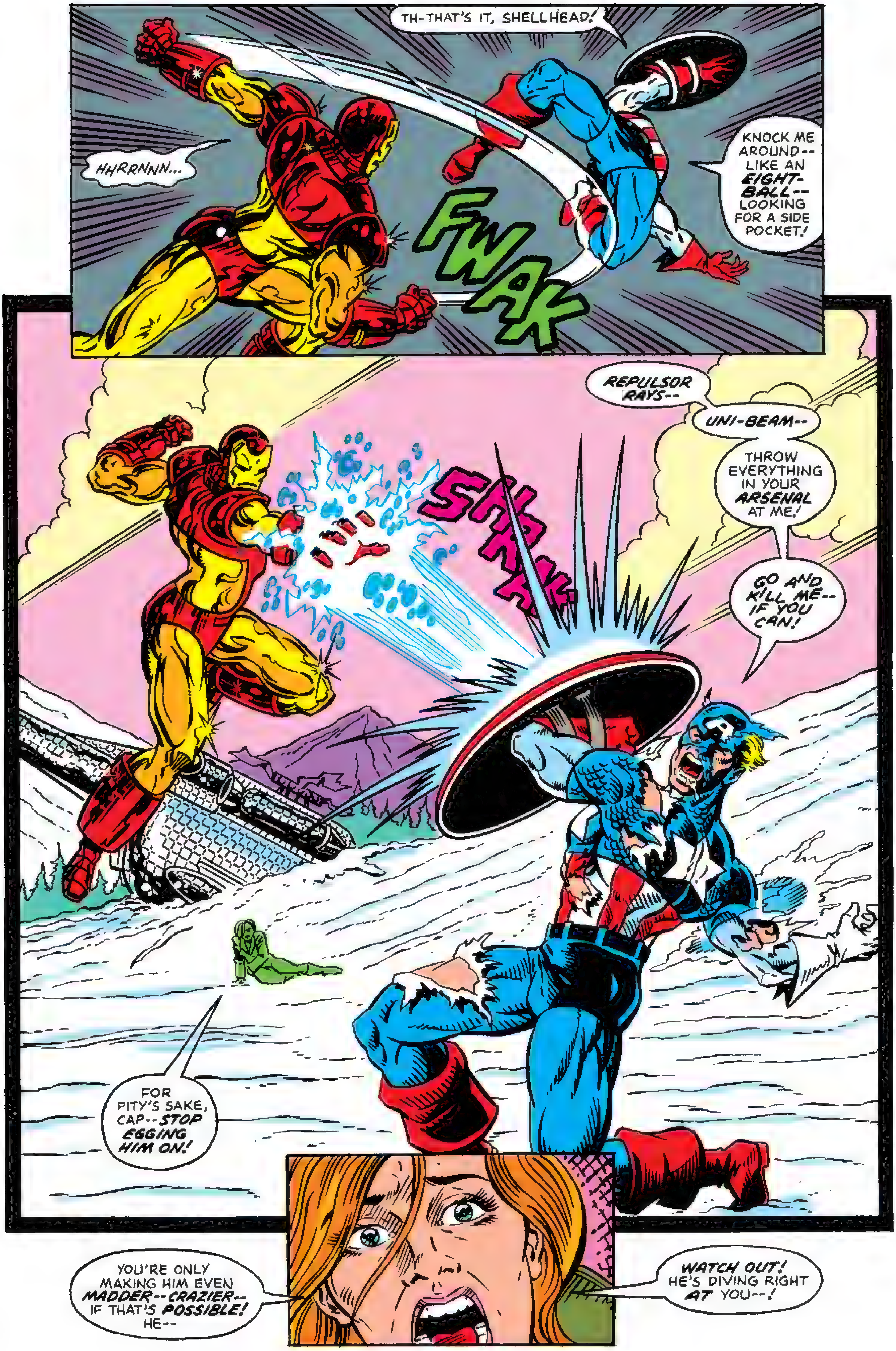

WH--WHAT IN BLAZES WAS HE TRYING TO *DO*, ANYWAY?
KILL US, I THINK.
THERE WAS SOMETHING IN THE *FOOD!* THAT'S GOT TO BE IT!
NOT *EVERYBODY'S* GONE BERSERK-- SOME PEOPLE ARE FLEEING IN *FEAR*--
NNNRRRNN...
DANGER HIGH VOLTAGE
GGNNNGG...
BUT THOSE *OTHERS--LOOK!* SOME OF THEM ARE RUNNING STRAIGHT TOWARD THAT *TERMINAL BOX!*
THEY'LL BE KILLED!
FZZZZZZZTTT
AARRR
GOOD LORD! THAT MAN RIPPED OUT THOSE *LIVE WIRES* WITH HIS BARE HANDS--
--LIKE HE HAD NO IDEA HE'D BE *ELECTROCUTED!*
AND THIS *BOY*-- HE'D HAVE DONE THE SAME THING, IF I HADN'T GOT TO HIM IN TIME.
WHAT'S GOING ON AROUND HERE?
GOT TO STOP THIS CHILD FROM TRYING IT AGAIN...!
COOL YOUR HEELS IN THIS ICE A SECOND, SON! I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
NNNGGNN...
IT'S NO USE! HE'S STILL OUT OF HIS HEAD-- FIGHTING ME--
--AND FROM THE LOOKS OF THINGS, HE'S ABOUT TO HAVE PLENTY OF *COMPANY!*

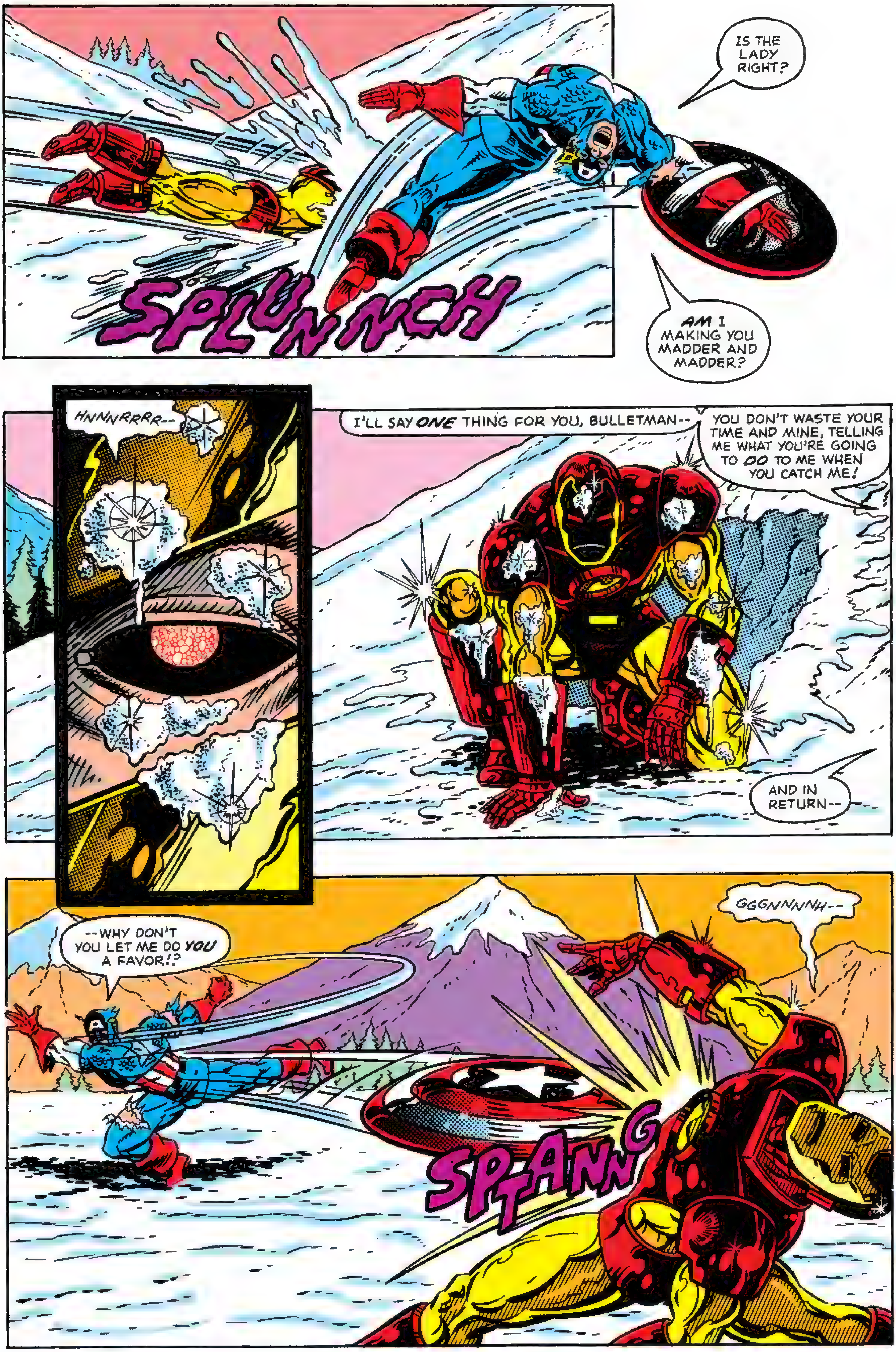

WHAT'S MORE, BECAUSE HE *KNOWS* ME SO WELL--
--THE ONE PERSON I *DON'T* NEED LEADING THAT CRAZED MOB--
--IS A HOMICIDAL *IRON MAN!*
KRANNGG
STUNNED HIM, AT LEAST!
HHRRRHH--!
BUT STILL NO *WORDS*--JUST *GIBBERISH*--FROM HIM AND THE OTHERS.
EVEN IF SOMETHING AT THAT FISH-FRY AFFECTED THEIR MINDS, THEY SHOULD STILL BE ABLE TO *TALK*.
NNNGGNNN...
RRRNNHH...
HUH? WHY ARE THOSE *"BERSERKERS"* CRAWLING ALL OVER IRON MAN?
I THOUGHT THEY WERE ALL ON THE *SAME SIDE!*
OF COURSE! FOR SOME REASON, THEY MUST BE AFTER--
M-MISTER AMERICA--C-CAN I G-GET *OUT* OF HERE NOW? I'M *C-C-COLD!*
THE BOY'S BACK TO *NORMAL!*
SURE THING SON. YOU RUN ALONG *HOME*--AND DON'T STOP FOR ANYTHING!
RAMONA--INTO THE *CHOPPER!* WE'VE GOT TO GET AIRBORNE!
IT WORKS FOR *ME!* BUT I DIDN'T THINK YOU HERO TYPES RAN AWAY FROM TROUBLE, NO MATTER WHAT.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT US GETTING LONELY...

IF THE *THEORY* THAT'S STARTING TO PERCOLATE IN MY BRAIN IS RIGHT--
THUP THUP THUP
--IRON MAN'LL BE *RIGHT ON OUR TAILS!*
KRAAAKK
THUP THUP THUP THUP
IF THAT'S TRUE--THEN WHY HEAD UP THE *MOUNTAIN* THAT LOOMS OVER THE TOWN?
WHY NOT HEAD OVERLAND? YOU'D HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF OUTRUNNING--
NO TIME TO EXPLAIN...
SHRR
AKKK
HE JUST TOOK US OUT!

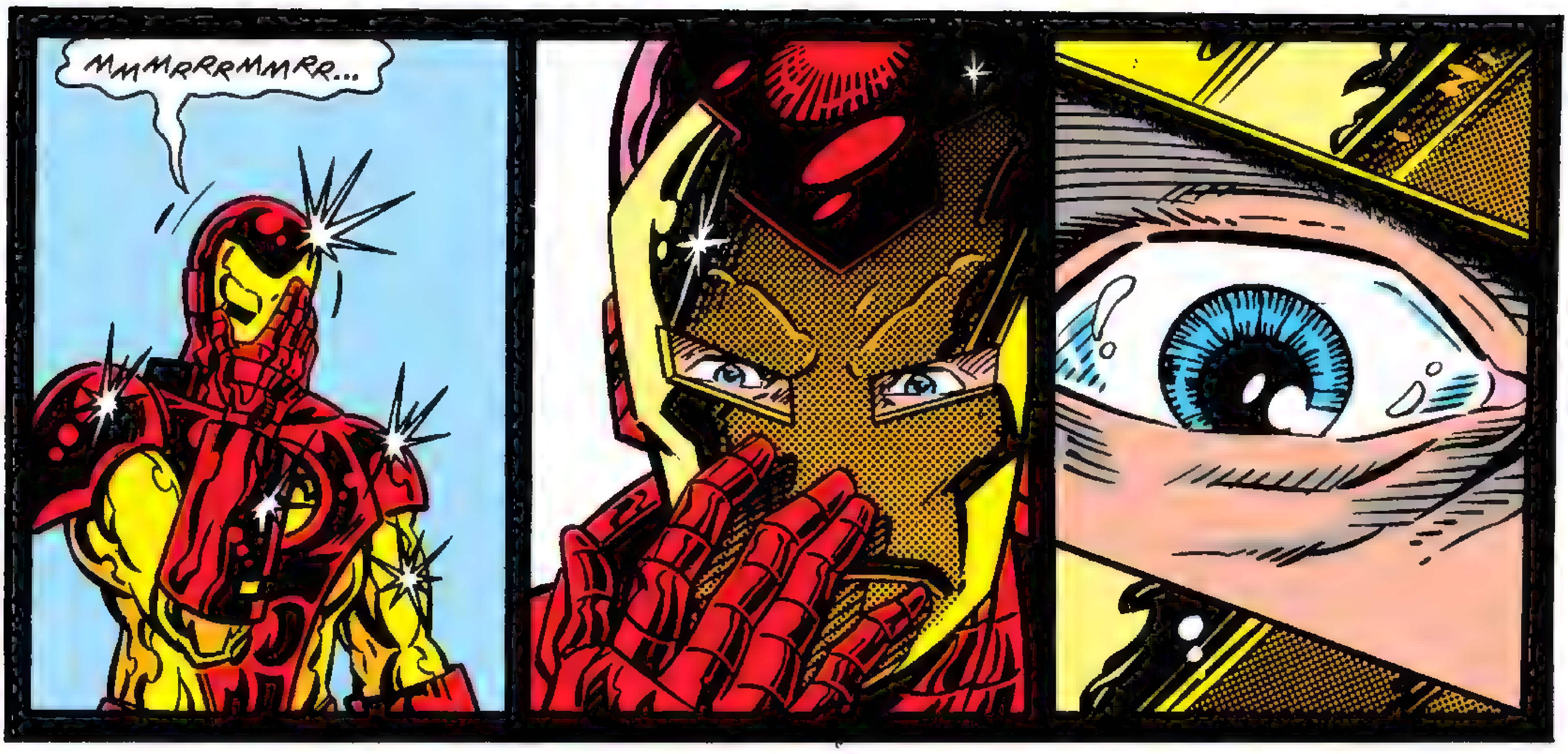

KRRASSSH
YOU--YOU WERE RIGHT, CAP! HE *DID* CHASE THE 'COPTER!
LUCKY US!
BUT HOW COULD YOU BE *SURE* HE-- *OWWW!*
YOU ALL RIGHT?
NEVER B-BETTER!..
AT LEAST I'VE GOT A READY *ICE PACK* FOR THIS THROBBING ANKLE--
--THANKS TO YOU MAKING SURE WE CRASHED NEAR THE *PEAK!*
STAY HERE!
I'VE GOT TO TAKE CARE OF OUR OVER-WROUGHT *KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR--*
--BEFORE THE *TOWNSPEOPLE* ARRIVE TO LEND HIM AN UNWANTED HAND!
HOLY--! THEY'RE MARCHING UP THAT MOUNTAIN PATH--LIKE THE CAST OF *"NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD"!*
IRON MAN!
IF YOU *WANT* ME--
IF THERE'S ENOUGH OF YOUR *BRAIN* FUNCTIONING FOR YOU TO HAVE ANY IDEA *WHAT* YOU WANT--
--COME AND GET ME!

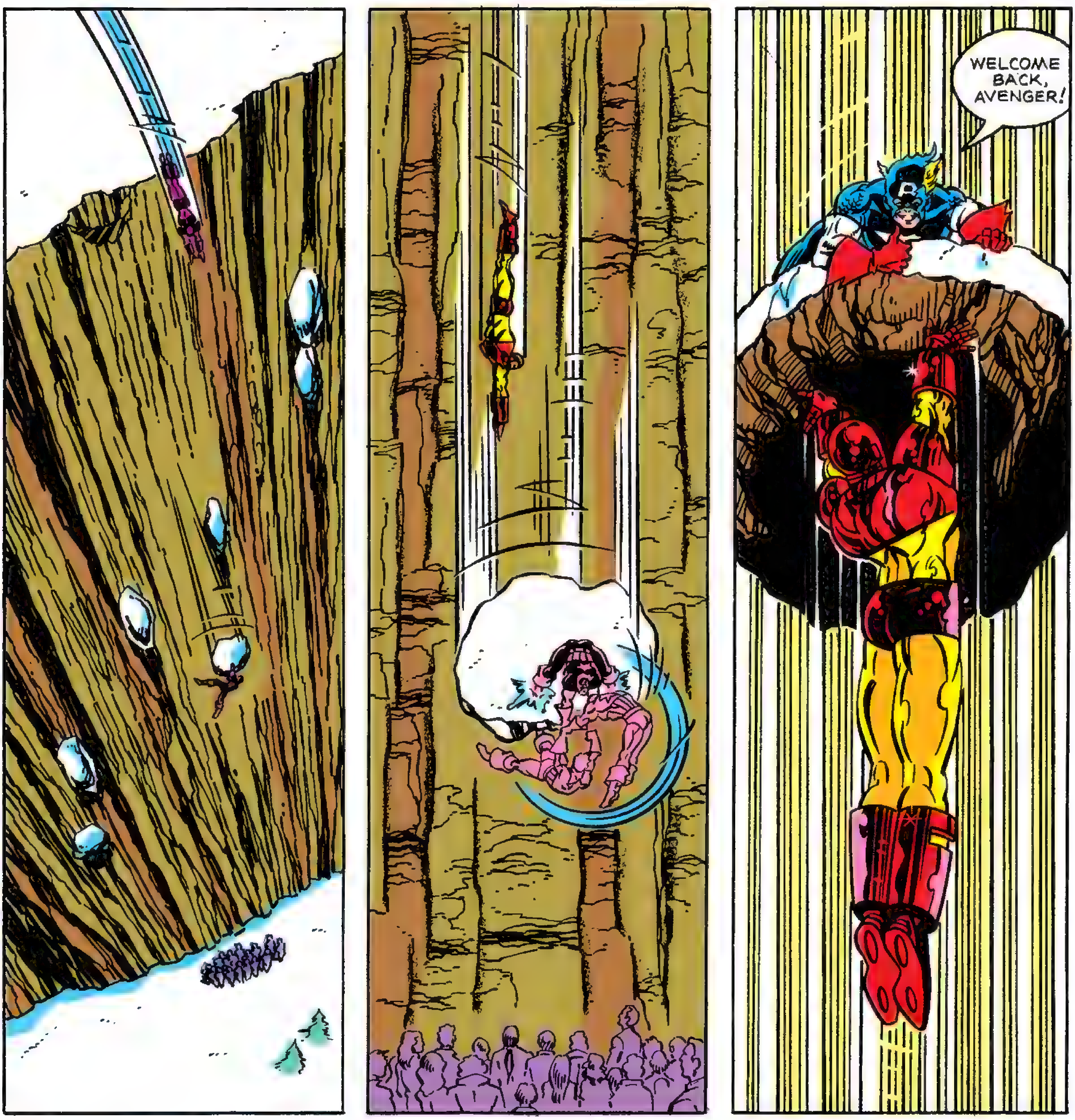

AND HE NEARLY *DID!*
THEY'VE ALWAYS CALLED CAPTAIN AMERICA A *HUMAN FIGHTING-MACHINE*--
--BUT WHAT CHANCE HAS HE GOT AGAINST A MADMAN WITH THE POWER OF AN *ACTUAL* MACHINE?
SHRAKK
HAS *CAP* GONE CRAZY, TOO--
--BRINGING US UP HERE JUST SO WE COULD DIE ON THE *SNOWLINE*--
--HIM ZAPPED BY ONE OF HIS *AVENGER* BUDDIES--
--AND *ME*, TORN TO PIECES BY THE *ZOMBIEVILLE CHAMBER OF COMM*--
CAP-- LOOK OUT!
THRAMMM

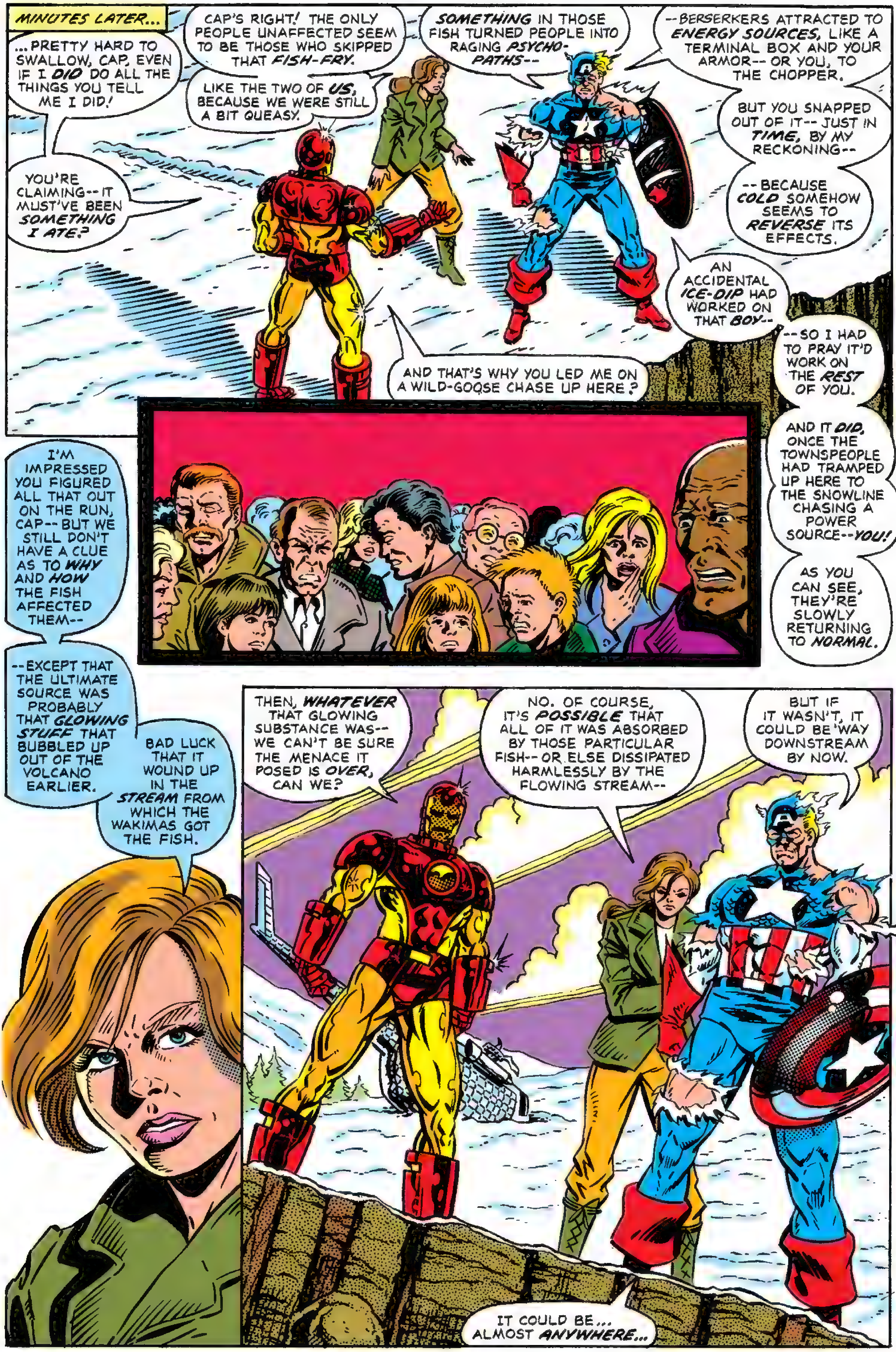

TH-THAT'S IT, SHELLHEAD!
HHRRNNN...
FWAK
KNOCK ME AROUND-- LIKE AN *EIGHT-BALL*-- LOOKING FOR A SIDE POCKET!
REPULSOR RAYS--
UNI-BEAM--
THROW EVERYTHING IN YOUR *ARSENAL* AT ME!
SHRAKK!
GO AND KILL ME-- IF YOU CAN!
FOR PITY'S SAKE, CAP-- *STOP EGGING HIM ON!*
YOU'RE ONLY MAKING HIM EVEN *MADDER-- CRAZIER--* IF THAT'S *POSSIBLE!* HE--
WATCH OUT! HE'S DIVING RIGHT *AT* YOU--!

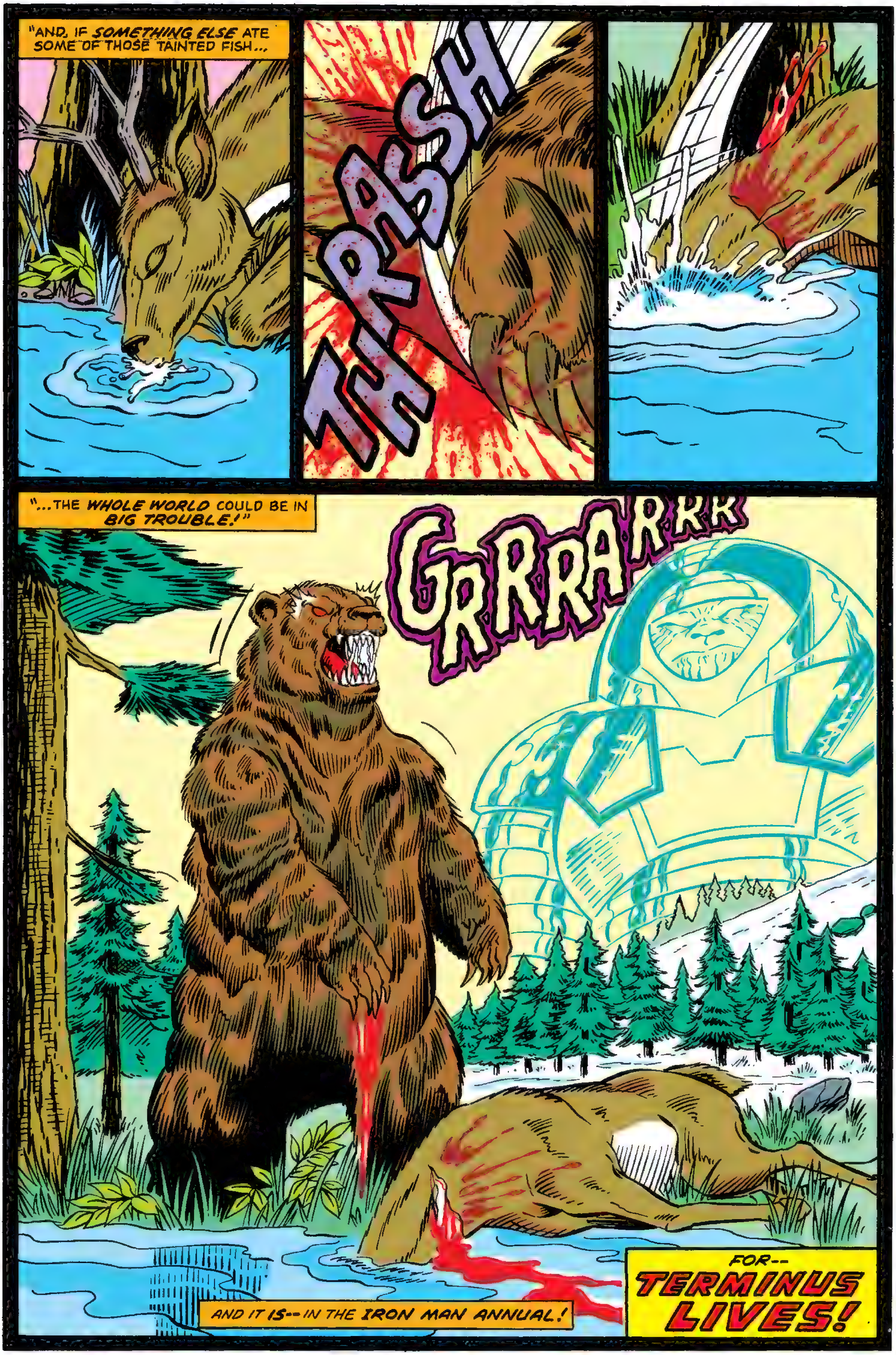

SPLUNNCH
IS THE LADY RIGHT?
AM I MAKING YOU MADDER AND MADDER?
HNNNRRRR--
I'LL SAY ONE THING FOR YOU, BULLETMAN--
YOU DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME AND MINE, TELLING ME WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO TO ME WHEN YOU CATCH ME!
AND IN RETURN--
--WHY DON'T YOU LET ME DO YOU A FAVOR!?
GGGNNNNH--
SPTANNG

--HNNNRRRH!
FCHOOOM
CAP!
AARRRH--!
I COULD-- HANG AROUND--AND SPAR WITH YOU--ALL DAY--
ZZZZZ
--BUT IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE I'M GOING TO GET THE *CHANCE!*


MMMRRRMMRR...

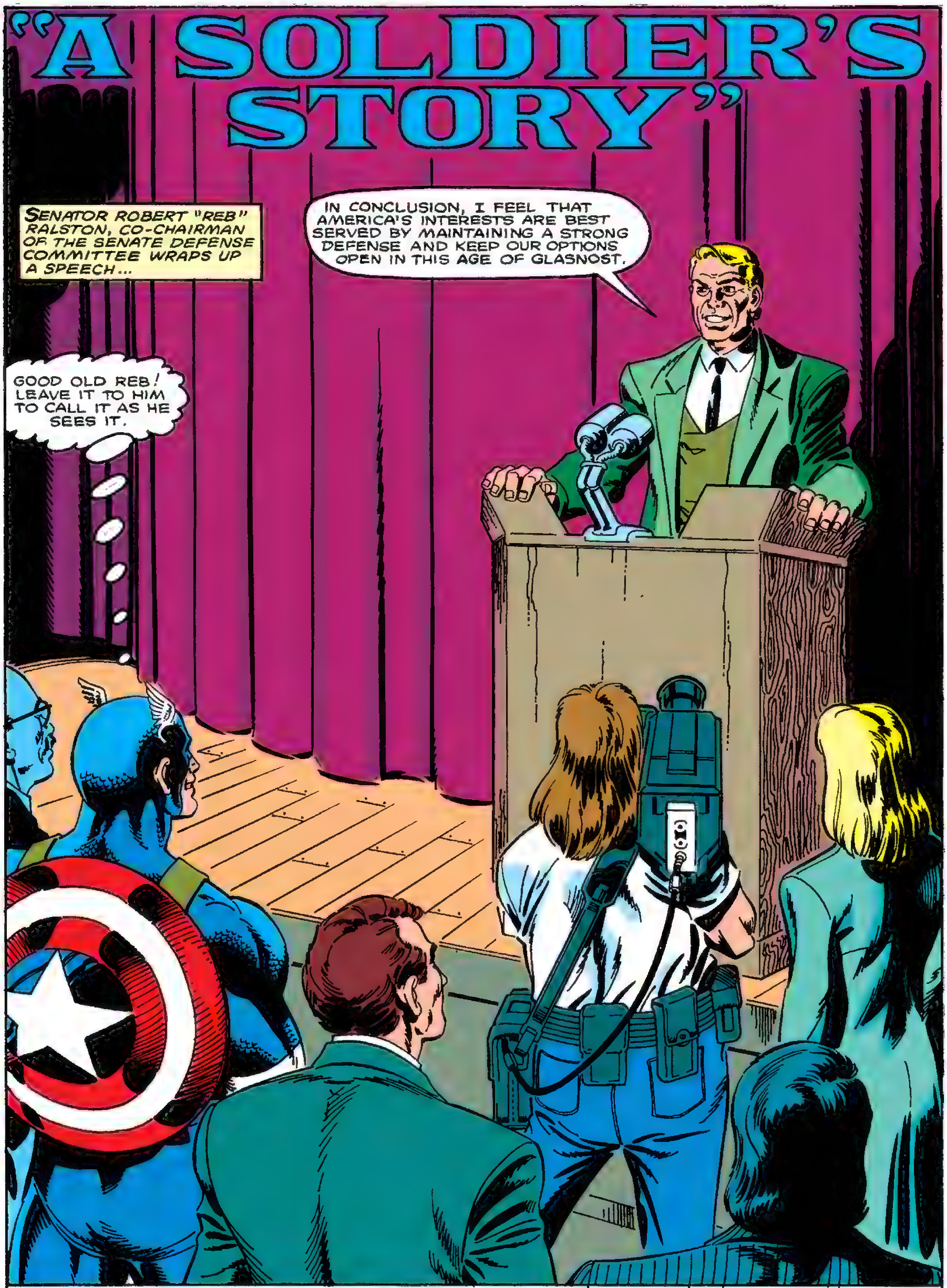

WELCOME BACK, AVENGER!


MINUTES LATER...
...PRETTY HARD TO SWALLOW, CAP, EVEN IF I *DID* DO ALL THE THINGS YOU TELL ME I DID!
YOU'RE CLAIMING-- IT MUST'VE BEEN *SOMETHING I ATE?*
CAP'S RIGHT! THE ONLY PEOPLE UNAFFECTED SEEM TO BE THOSE WHO SKIPPED THAT *FISH-FRY.*
LIKE THE TWO OF *US,* BECAUSE WE WERE STILL A BIT QUEASY.
SOMETHING IN THOSE FISH TURNED PEOPLE INTO RAGING *PSYCHO-PATHS--*
--BERSERKERS ATTRACTED TO *ENERGY SOURCES,* LIKE A TERMINAL BOX AND YOUR ARMOR-- OR YOU, TO THE CHOPPER.
BUT YOU SNAPPED OUT OF IT-- JUST IN *TIME,* BY MY RECKONING--
--BECAUSE *COLD* SOMEHOW SEEMS TO *REVERSE* ITS EFFECTS.
AN ACCIDENTAL *ICE-DIP* HAD WORKED ON THAT *BOY--*
AND THAT'S WHY YOU LED ME ON A WILD-GOOSE CHASE UP HERE?
--SO I HAD TO PRAY IT'D WORK ON THE *REST* OF YOU.
AND IT *DID,* ONCE THE TOWNSPEOPLE HAD TRAMPED UP HERE TO THE SNOWLINE CHASING A POWER SOURCE--*YOU!*
AS YOU CAN SEE, THEY'RE SLOWLY RETURNING TO *NORMAL.*
I'M IMPRESSED YOU FIGURED ALL THAT OUT ON THE RUN, CAP-- BUT WE STILL DON'T HAVE A CLUE AS TO *WHY* AND *HOW* THE FISH AFFECTED THEM--
--EXCEPT THAT THE ULTIMATE SOURCE WAS PROBABLY THAT *GLOWING STUFF* THAT BUBBLED UP OUT OF THE VOLCANO EARLIER.
BAD LUCK THAT IT WOUND UP IN THE *STREAM* FROM WHICH THE WAKIMAS GOT THE FISH.
THEN, *WHATEVER* THAT GLOWING SUBSTANCE WAS-- WE CAN'T BE SURE THE MENACE IT POSED IS *OVER,* CAN WE?
NO. OF COURSE, IT'S *POSSIBLE* THAT ALL OF IT WAS ABSORBED BY THOSE PARTICULAR FISH-- OR ELSE DISSIPATED HARMLESSLY BY THE FLOWING STREAM--
BUT IF IT WASN'T, IT COULD BE 'WAY DOWNSTREAM BY NOW.
IT COULD BE... ALMOST *ANYWHERE...*

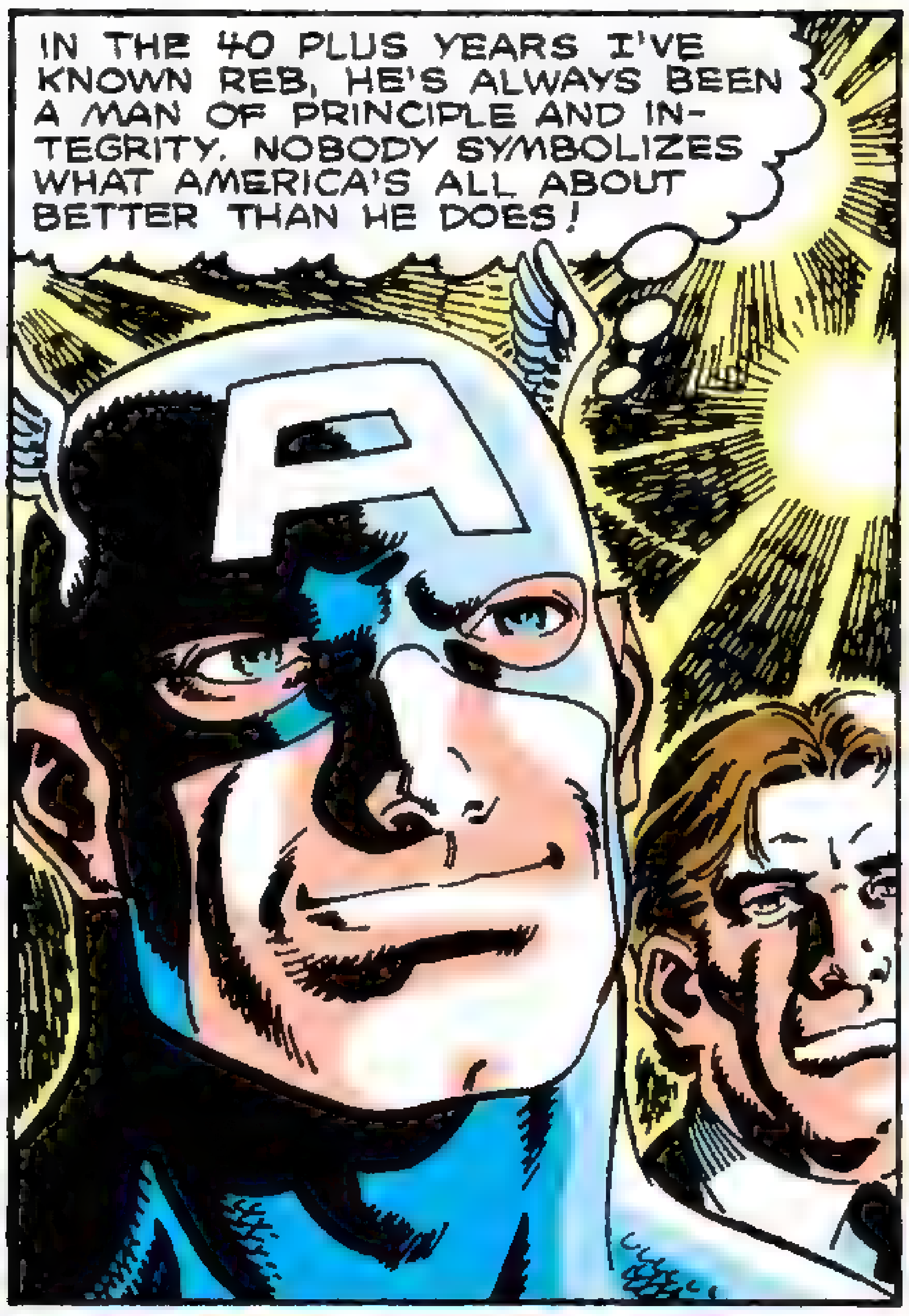

"AND, IF SOMETHING ELSE ATE SOME OF THOSE TAINTED FISH...
THRASH
"...THE WHOLE WORLD COULD BE IN BIG TROUBLE!"
GRRRARRRR
AND IT IS-- IN THE IRON MAN ANNUAL!
FOR-- TERMINUS LIVES!

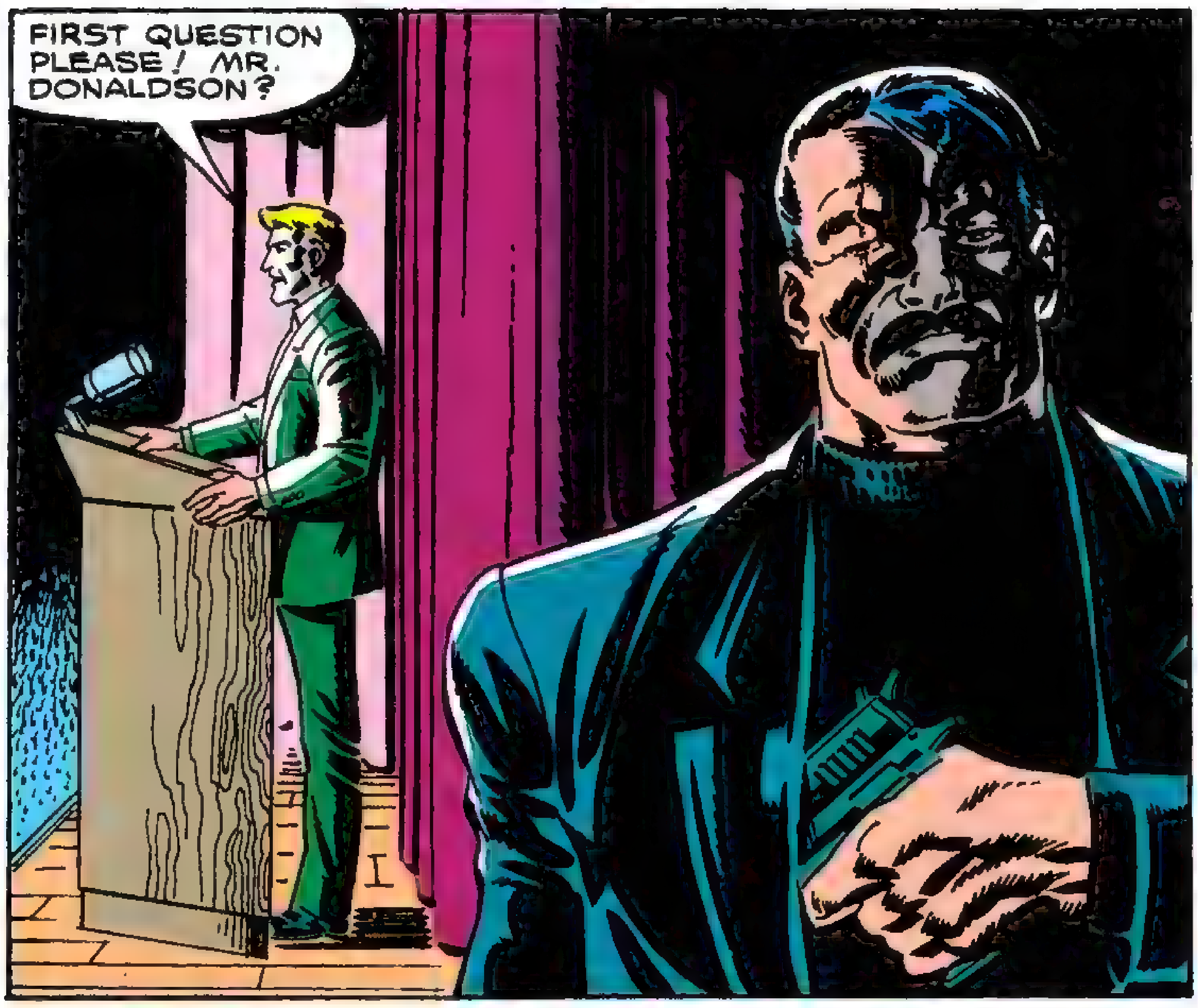
STEVE ROGERS . . . BORN IN THE U.S.A., RAISED TO CHERISH THE IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY, ENDOWED WITH A SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE, AND DRIVEN TO BE THE MOST CAPABLE COMBATANT IN THE WORLD. NOW AS BOTH LONE CRUSADER AND LEADER OF THE RENOWNED AVENGERS, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM! STAN LEE PRESENTS . . . CAPTAIN AMERICA!

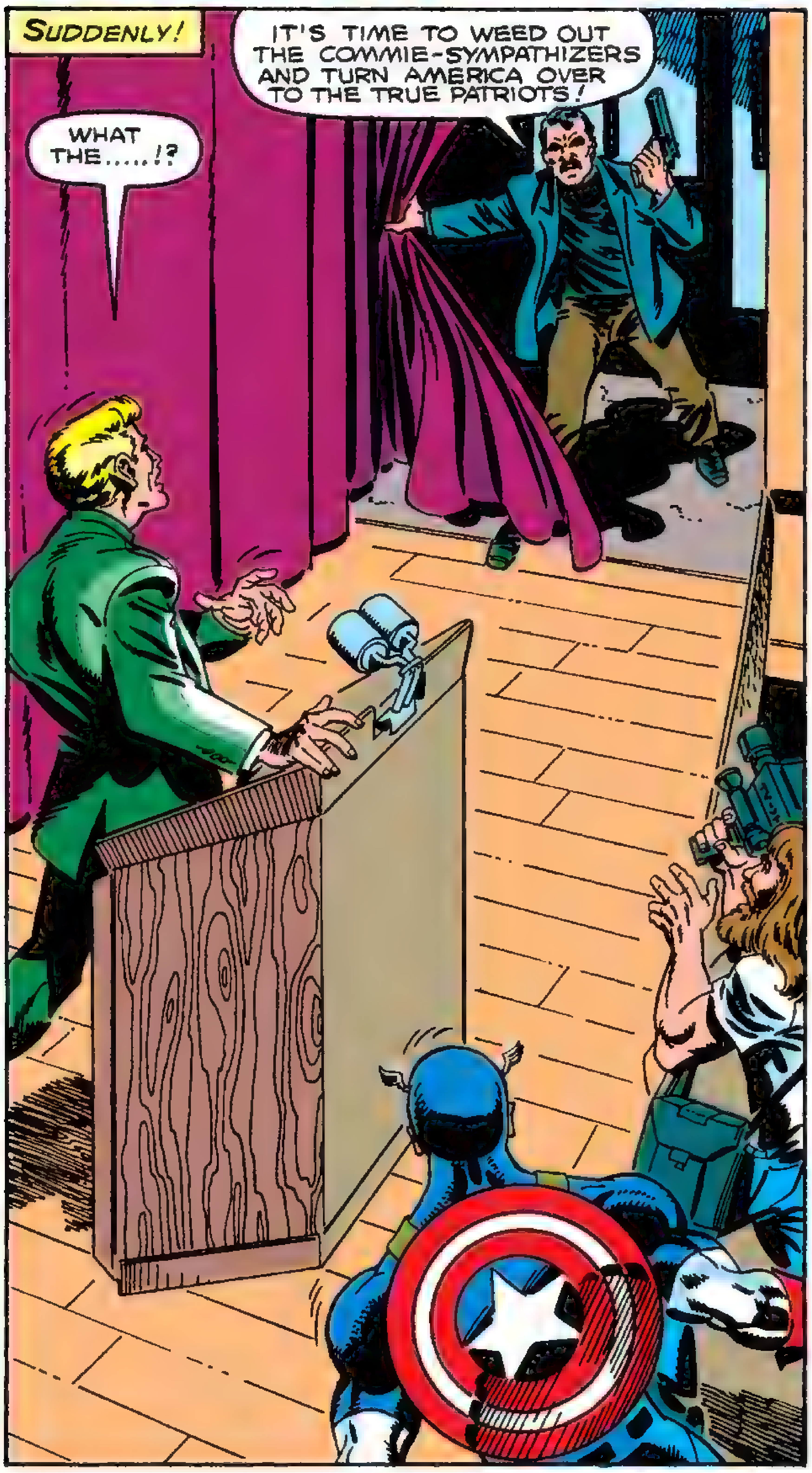
"A SOLDIER'S STORY"

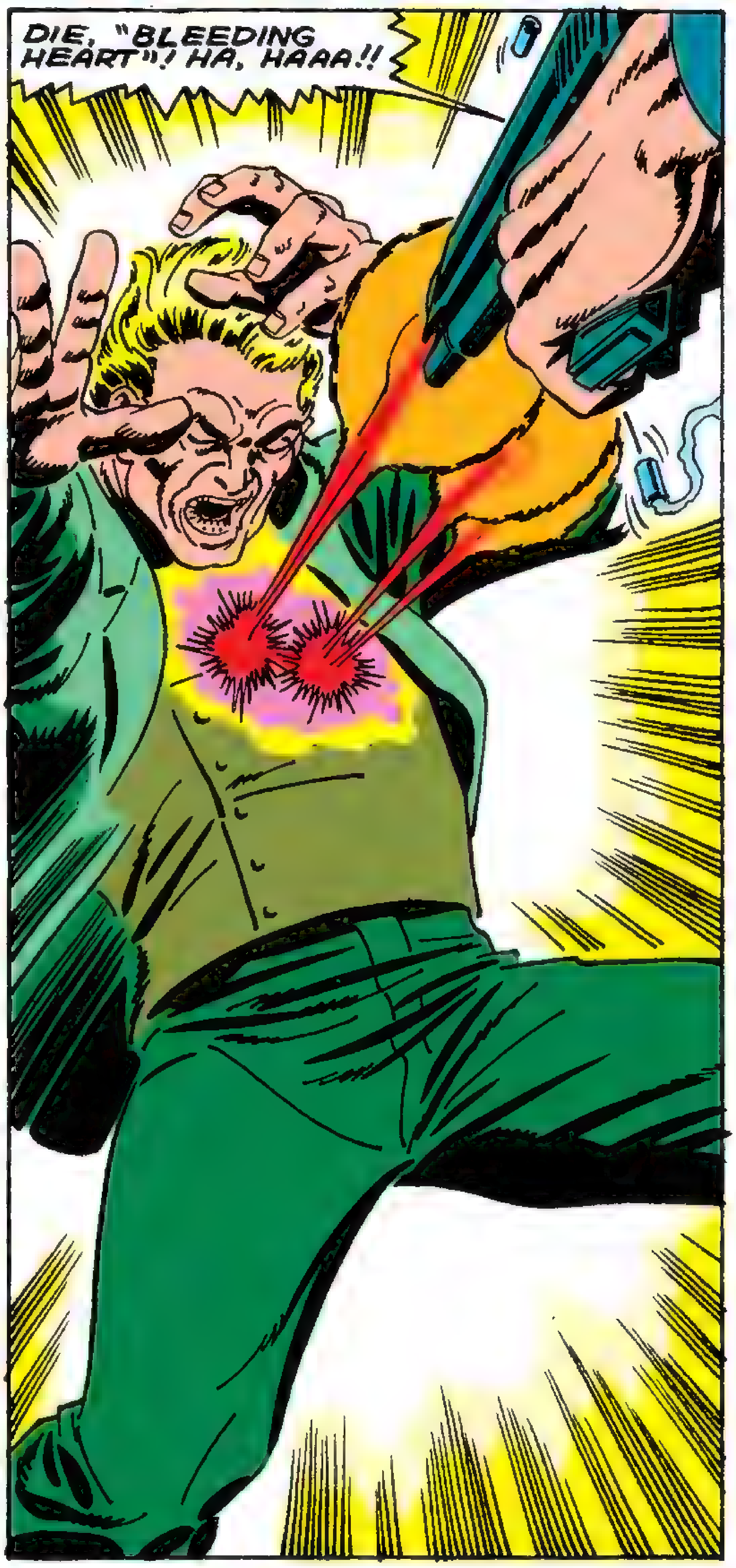

SENATOR ROBERT "REB" RALSTON, CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE DEFENSE COMMITTEE WRAPS UP A SPEECH...
IN CONCLUSION, I FEEL THAT AMERICA'S INTERESTS ARE BEST SERVED BY MAINTAINING A STRONG DEFENSE AND KEEP OUR OPTIONS OPEN IN THIS AGE OF GLASNOST.
GOOD OLD REB! LEAVE IT TO HIM TO CALL IT AS HE SEES IT.

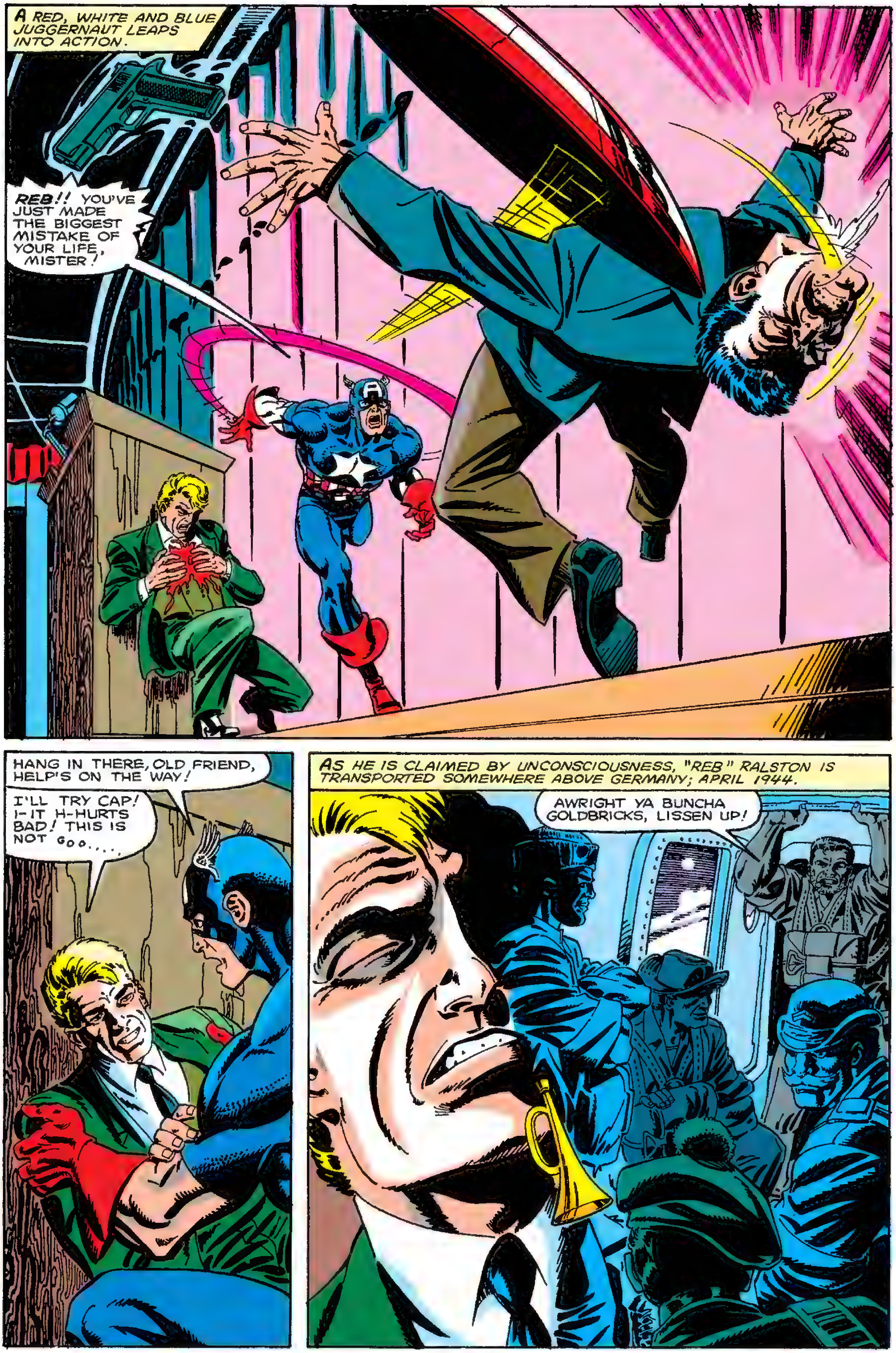
RANDALL FRENZ *WRITER* / MARK BAGLEY *PENCILER* / MIKE DeCARLO *INKER* / DIANA ALBERS *LETTERER* / EVELYN STEIN *COLORIST* / RALPH MACCHIO *EDITOR* / TOM DeFALCO *EDITOR IN CHIEF*

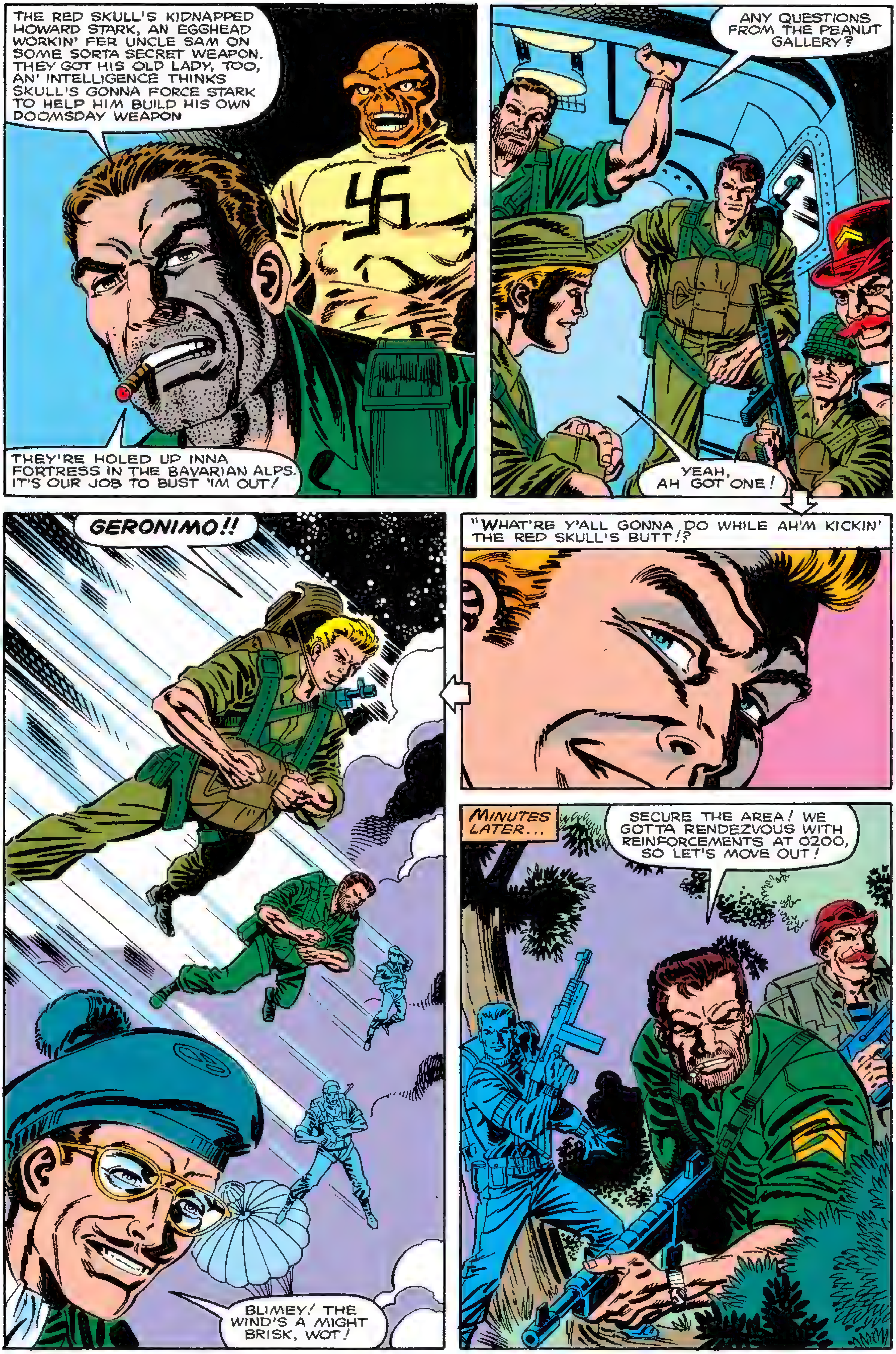

IN THE 40 PLUS YEARS I'VE KNOWN REB, HE'S ALWAYS BEEN A MAN OF PRINCIPLE AND INTEGRITY. NOBODY SYMBOLIZES WHAT AMERICA'S ALL ABOUT BETTER THAN HE DOES!

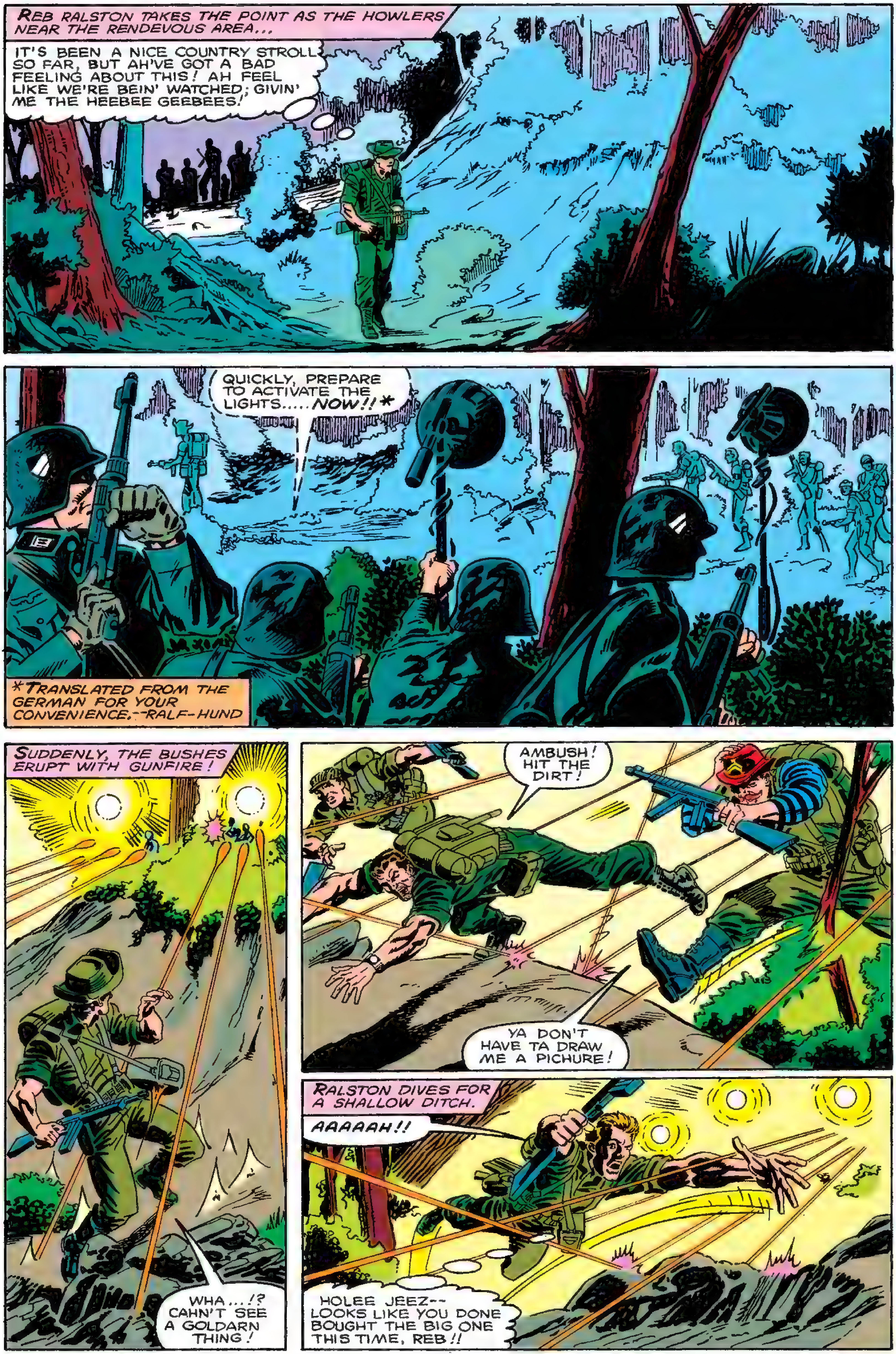

FIRST QUESTION PLEASE! MR. DONALDSON?

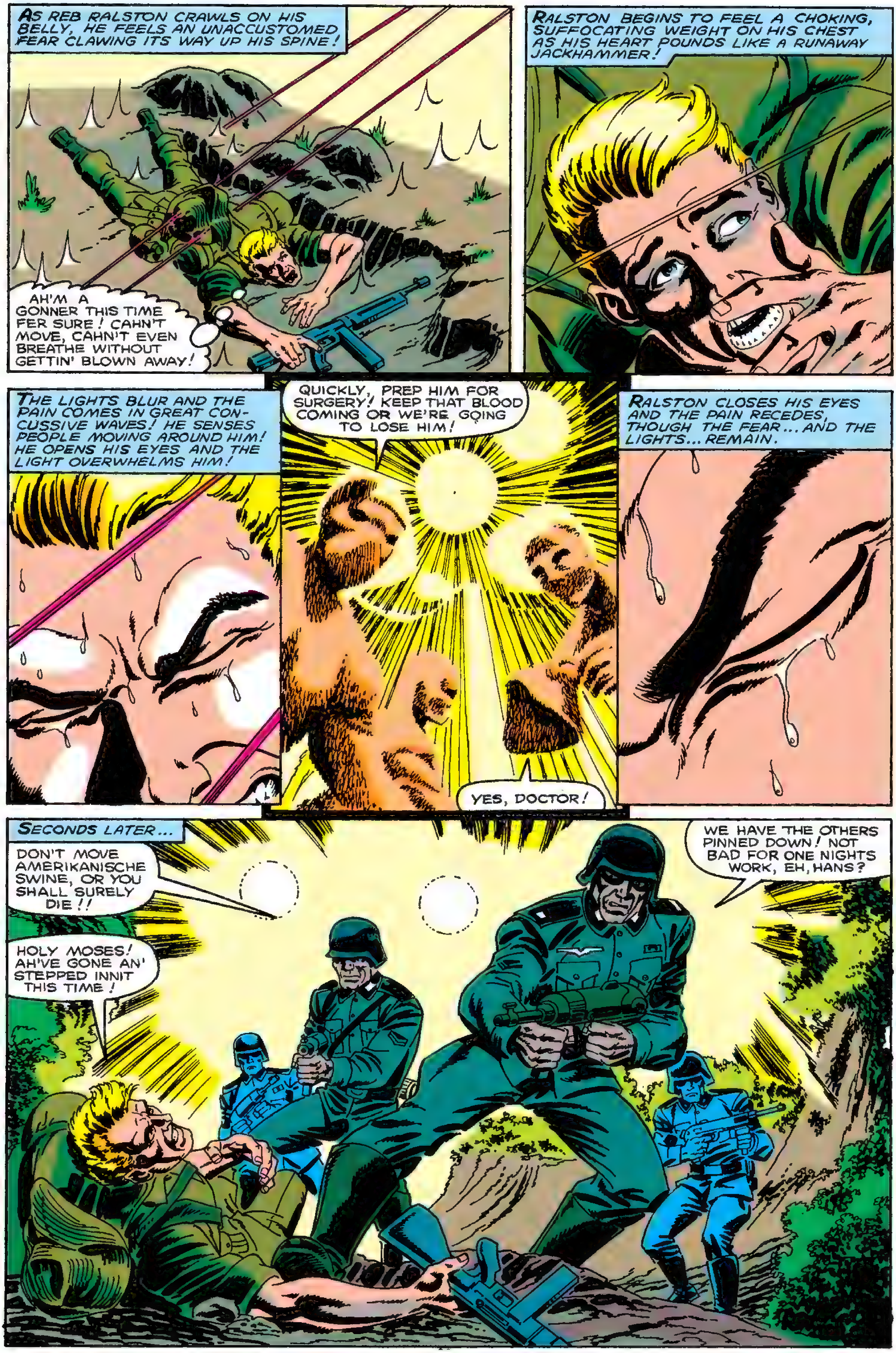

SUDDENLY!
WHAT THE.....!?
IT'S TIME TO WEED OUT THE COMMIE-SYMPATHIZERS AND TURN AMERICA OVER TO THE TRUE PATRIOTS!

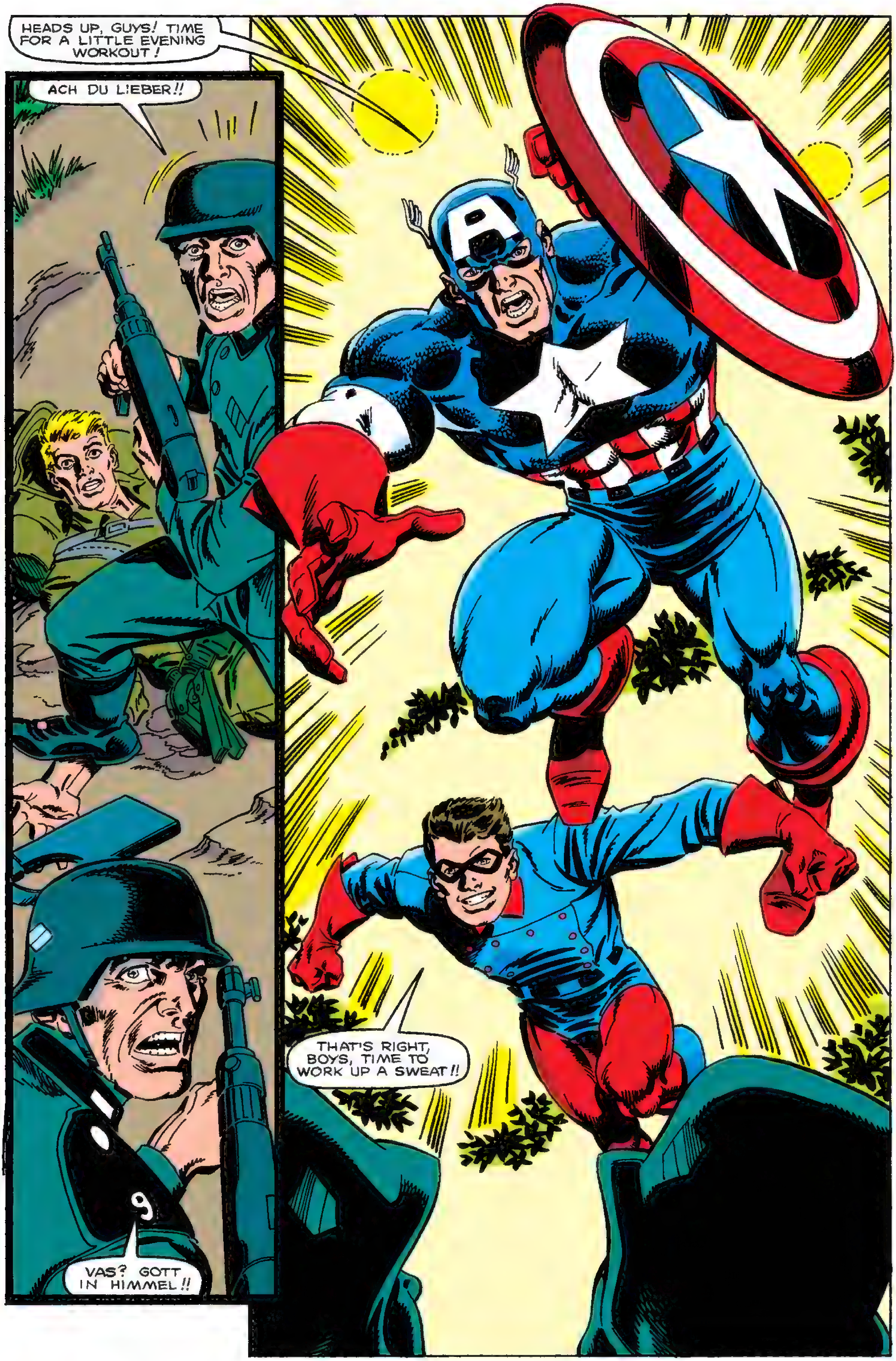

DIE, "BLEEDING HEART"! HA, HAAA!!

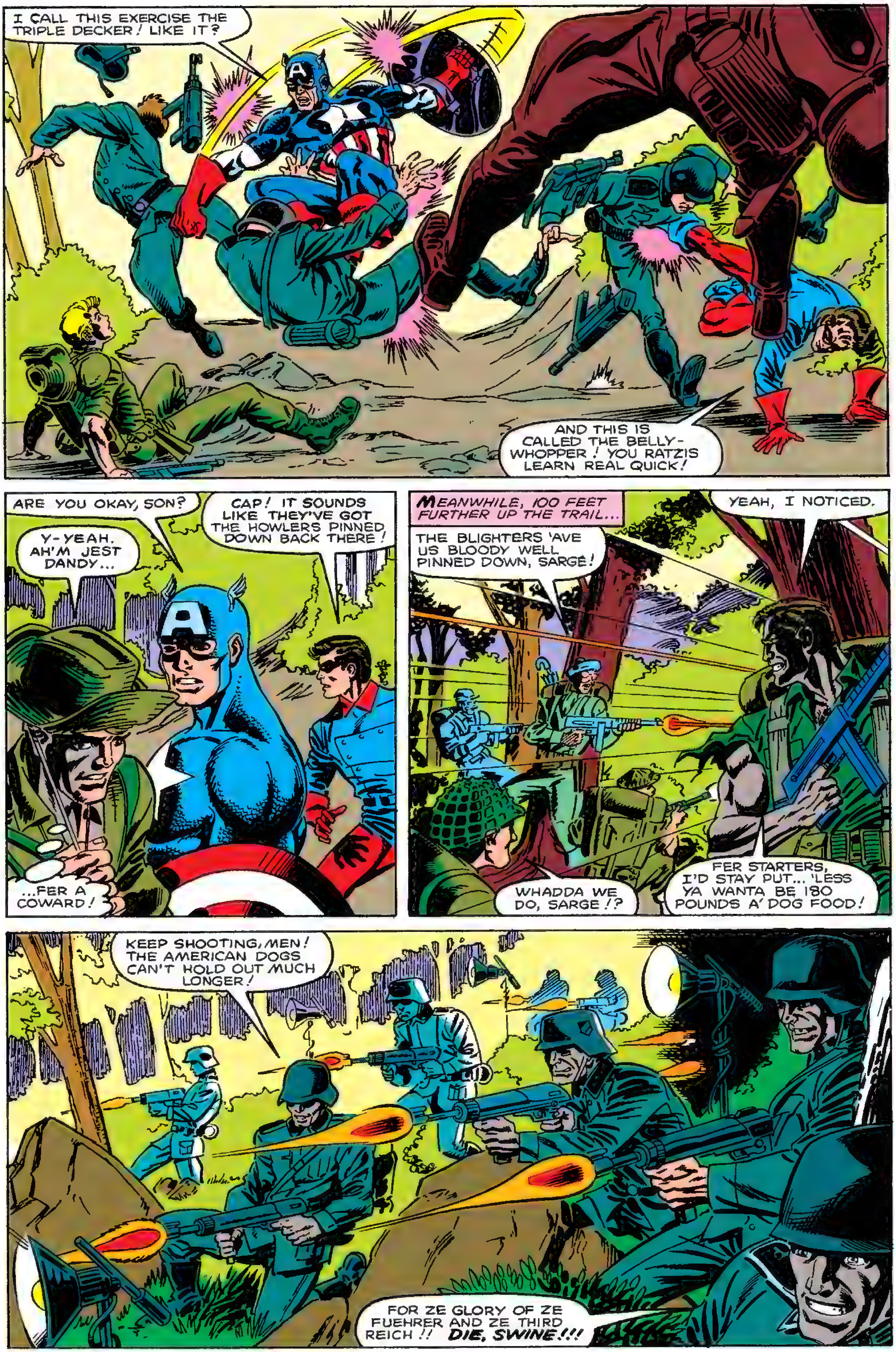

A RED, WHITE AND BLUE JUGGERNAUT LEAPS INTO ACTION.
REB!! YOU'VE JUST MADE THE BIGGEST MISTAKE OF YOUR LIFE, MISTER!
HANG IN THERE, OLD FRIEND, HELP'S ON THE WAY!
I'LL TRY CAP! I-IT H-HURTS BAD! THIS IS NOT GOO....
AS HE IS CLAIMED BY UNCONSCIOUSNESS, "REB" RALSTON IS TRANSPORTED SOMEWHERE ABOVE GERMANY; APRIL 1944.
AWRIGHT YA BUNCHA GOLDBRICKS, LISSEN UP!

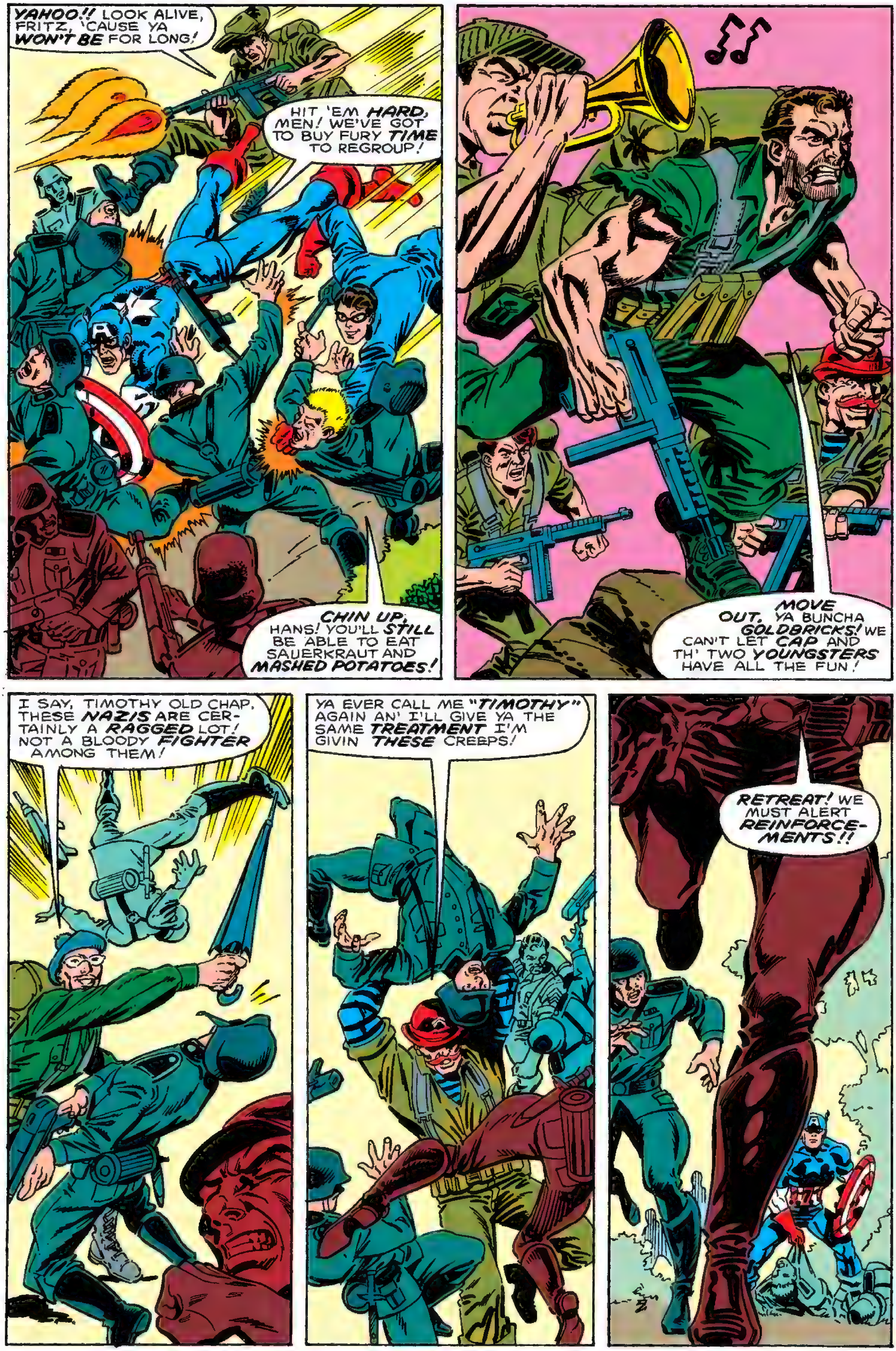

THE RED SKULL'S KIDNAPPED HOWARD STARK, AN EGGHEAD WORKIN' FER UNCLE SAM ON SOME SORTA SECRET WEAPON. THEY GOT HIS OLD LADY, TOO, AN' INTELLIGENCE THINKS SKULL'S GONNA FORCE STARK TO HELP HIM BUILD HIS OWN DOOMSDAY WEAPON
THEY'RE HOLED UP INNA FORTRESS IN THE BAVARIAN ALPS. IT'S OUR JOB TO BUST 'IM OUT!
ANY QUESTIONS FROM THE PEANUT GALLERY?
YEAH, AH GOT ONE!
"WHAT'RE Y'ALL GONNA DO WHILE AH'M KICKIN' THE RED SKULL'S BUTT!?
GERONIMO!!
BLIMEY! THE WIND'S A MIGHT BRISK, WOT!
MINUTES LATER...
SECURE THE AREA! WE GOTTA RENDEZVOUS WITH REINFORCEMENTS AT 0200, SO LET'S MOVE OUT!

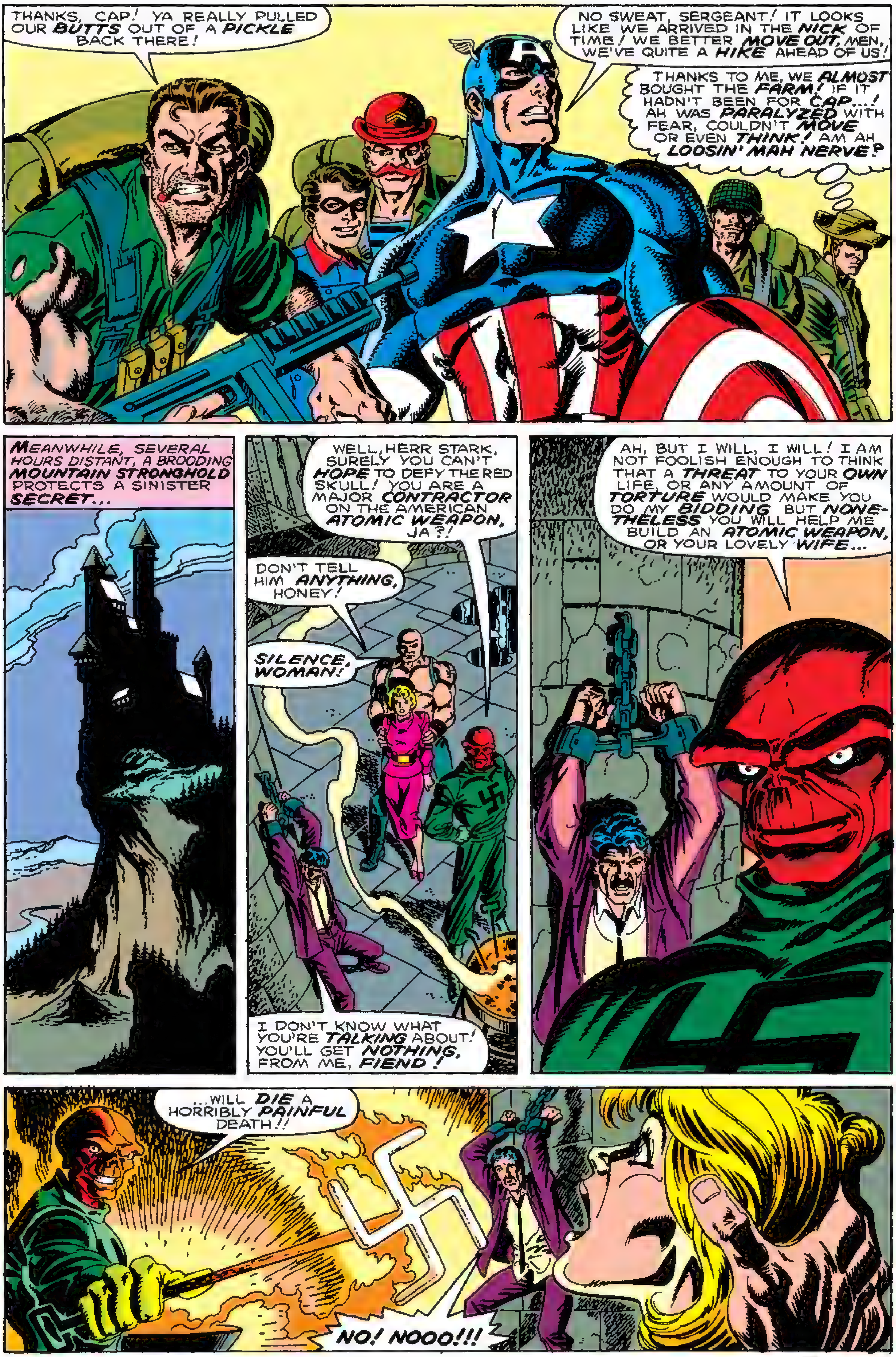

REB RALSTON TAKES THE POINT AS THE HOWLERS NEAR THE RENDEVOUS AREA...
IT'S BEEN A NICE COUNTRY STROLL SO FAR, BUT AH'VE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS! AH FEEL LIKE WE'RE BEIN' WATCHED; GIVIN' ME THE HEEBEE GEEBEES!
QUICKLY, PREPARE TO ACTIVATE THE LIGHTS..... NOW!! *
*TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE.--RALF-HUND
SUDDENLY, THE BUSHES ERUPT WITH GUNFIRE!
WHA...!? CAHN'T SEE A GOLDARN THING!
AMBUSH! HIT THE DIRT!
YA DON'T HAVE TA DRAW ME A PICHURE!
RALSTON DIVES FOR A SHALLOW DITCH.
AAAAAH!!
HOLEE JEEZ-- LOOKS LIKE YOU DONE BOUGHT THE BIG ONE THIS TIME, REB!!

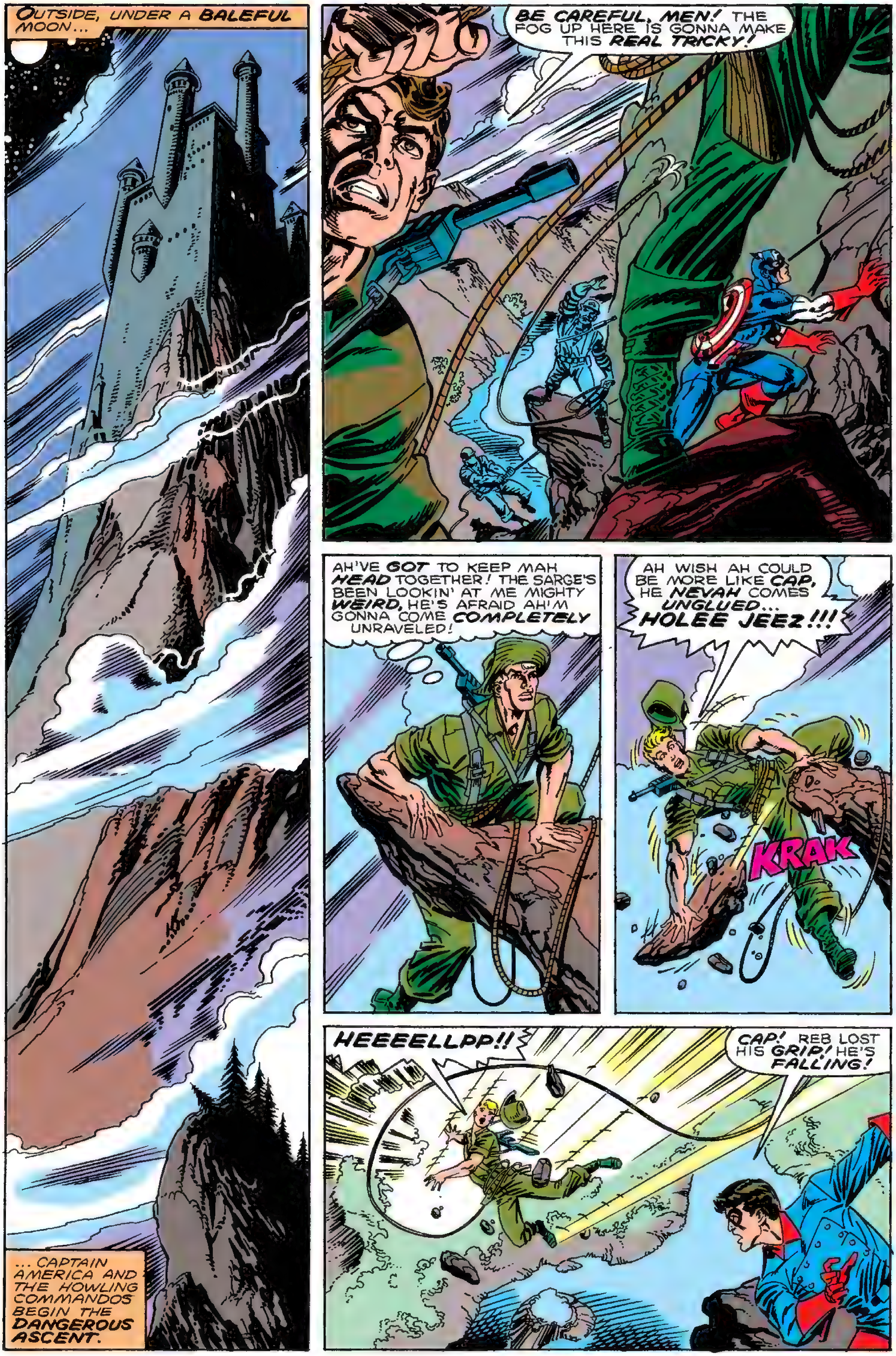

AS REB RALSTON CRAWLS ON HIS BELLY, HE FEELS AN UNACCUSTOMED FEAR CLAWING ITS WAY UP HIS SPINE!
AH'M A GONNER THIS TIME FER SURE! CAHN'T MOVE, CAHN'T EVEN BREATHE WITHOUT GETTIN' BLOWN AWAY!
RALSTON BEGINS TO FEEL A CHOKING, SUFFOCATING WEIGHT ON HIS CHEST AS HIS HEART POUNDS LIKE A RUNAWAY JACKHAMMER!
THE LIGHTS BLUR AND THE PAIN COMES IN GREAT CONCUSSIVE WAVES! HE SENSES PEOPLE MOVING AROUND HIM! HE OPENS HIS EYES AND THE LIGHT OVERWHELMS HIM!
QUICKLY, PREP HIM FOR SURGERY! KEEP THAT BLOOD COMING OR WE'RE GOING TO LOSE HIM!
YES, DOCTOR!
RALSTON CLOSES HIS EYES AND THE PAIN RECEDES, THOUGH THE FEAR... AND THE LIGHTS... REMAIN.
SECONDS LATER...
DON'T MOVE AMERIKANISCHE SWINE, OR YOU SHALL SURELY DIE!!
HOLY MOSES! AH'VE GONE AN' STEPPED INNIT THIS TIME!
WE HAVE THE OTHERS PINNED DOWN! NOT BAD FOR ONE NIGHTS WORK, EH, HANS?


HEADS UP, GUYS! TIME FOR A LITTLE EVENING WORKOUT!
ACH DU LIEBER!!
THAT'S RIGHT, BOYS, TIME TO WORK UP A SWEAT!!
VAS? GOTT IN HIMMEL!!

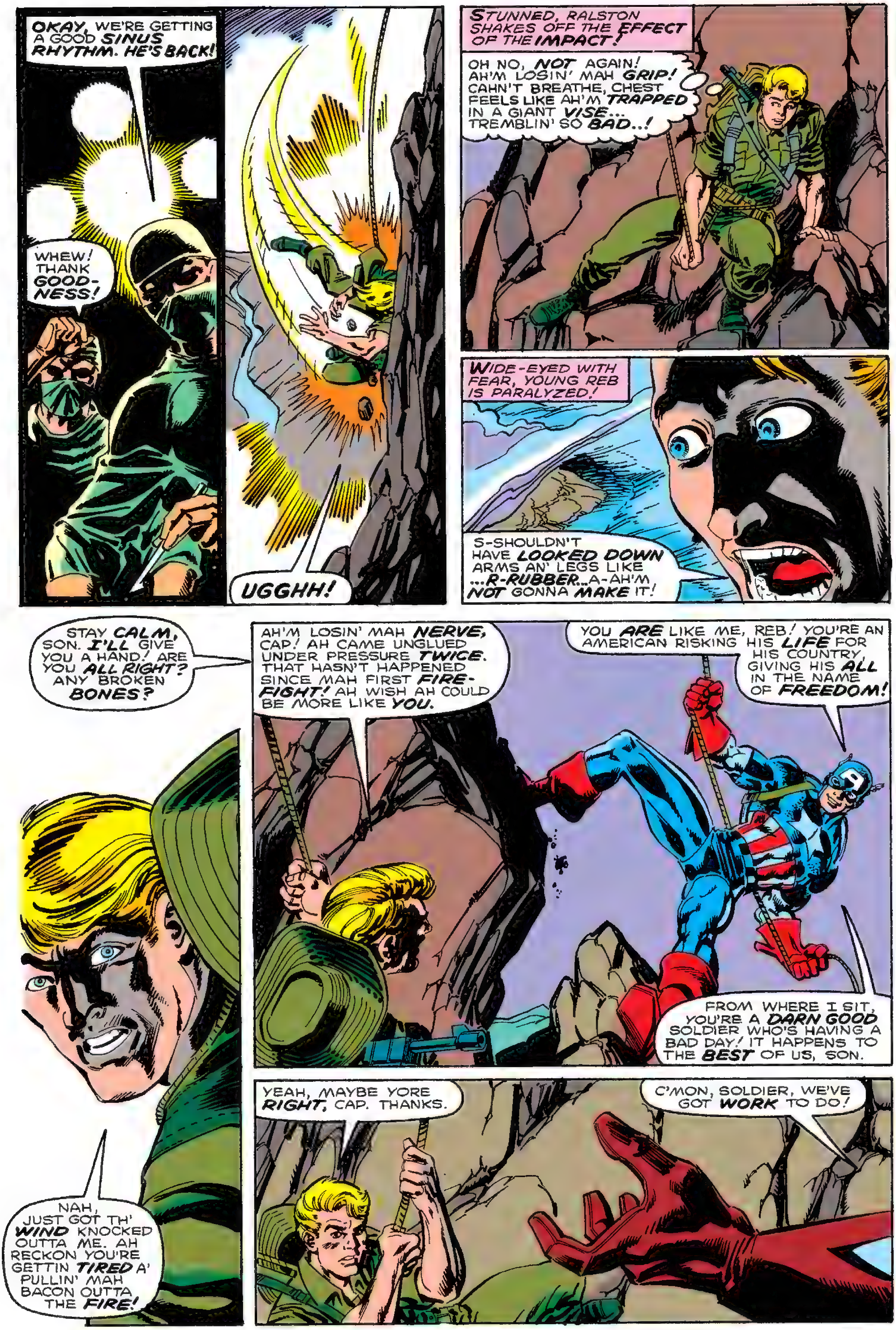

I CALL THIS EXERCISE THE TRIPLE DECKER! LIKE IT?
AND THIS IS CALLED THE BELLY-WHOPPER! YOU RATZIS LEARN REAL QUICK!
ARE YOU OKAY, SON?
Y-YEAH. AH'M JEST DANDY...
CAP! IT SOUNDS LIKE THEY'VE GOT THE HOWLERS PINNED DOWN BACK THERE!
...FER A COWARD!
MEANWHILE, 100 FEET FURTHER UP THE TRAIL...
THE BLIGHTERS 'AVE US BLOODY WELL PINNED DOWN, SARGE!
YEAH, I NOTICED.
WHADDA WE DO, SARGE!?
FER STARTERS, I'D STAY PUT... 'LESS YA WANTA BE 180 POUNDS A' DOG FOOD!
KEEP SHOOTING, MEN! THE AMERICAN DOGS CAN'T HOLD OUT MUCH LONGER!
FOR ZE GLORY OF ZE FUEHRER AND ZE THIRD REICH!! DIE, SWINE!!!

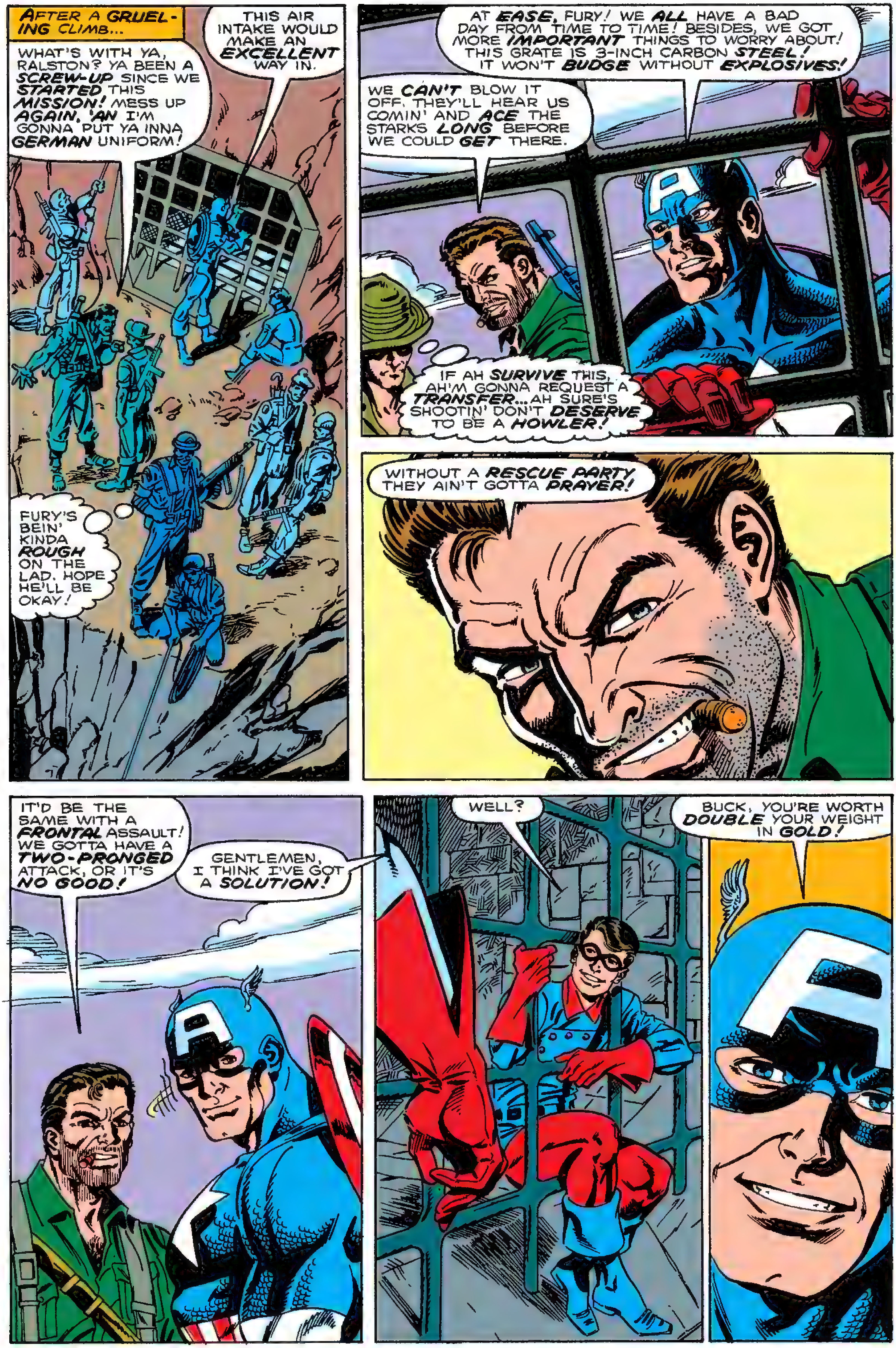

YAHOO!! LOOK ALIVE, FRITZ, 'CAUSE YA WON'T BE FOR LONG!
HIT 'EM HARD, MEN! WE'VE GOT TO BUY FURY TIME TO REGROUP!
CHIN UP, HANS! YOU'LL STILL BE ABLE TO EAT SAUERKRAUT AND MASHED POTATOES!
MOVE OUT, YA BUNCHA GOLDBRICKS! WE CAN'T LET CAP AND TH' TWO YOUNGSTERS HAVE ALL THE FUN!
I SAY, TIMOTHY OLD CHAP, THESE NAZIS ARE CERTAINLY A RAGGED LOT! NOT A BLOODY FIGHTER AMONG THEM!
YA EVER CALL ME "TIMOTHY" AGAIN AN' I'LL GIVE YA THE SAME TREATMENT I'M GIVIN THESE CREEPS!
RETREAT! WE MUST ALERT REINFORCEMENTS!!

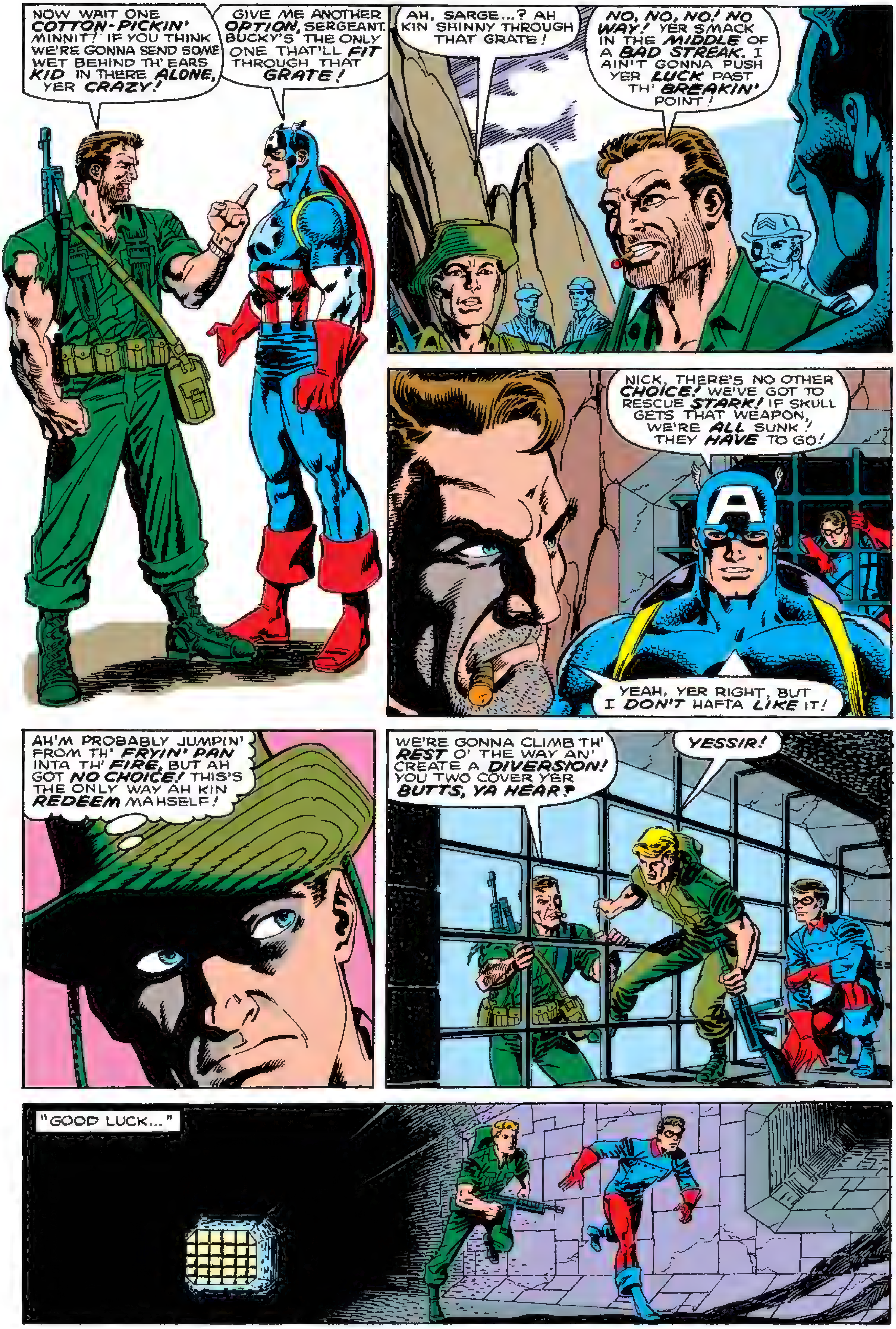

THANKS, CAP! YA REALLY PULLED OUR BUTTS OUT OF A PICKLE BACK THERE!
NO SWEAT, SERGEANT! IT LOOKS LIKE WE ARRIVED IN THE NICK OF TIME! WE BETTER MOVE OUT, MEN, WE'VE QUITE A HIKE AHEAD OF US!
THANKS TO ME, WE ALMOST BOUGHT THE FARM! IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR CAP...! AH WAS PARALYZED WITH FEAR, COULDN'T MOVE OR EVEN THINK! AM AH LOOSIN' MAH NERVE?
MEANWHILE, SEVERAL HOURS DISTANT, A BROODING MOUNTAIN STRONGHOLD PROTECTS A SINISTER SECRET...
WELL, HERR STARK, SURELY YOU CAN'T HOPE TO DEFY THE RED SKULL! YOU ARE A MAJOR CONTRACTOR ON THE AMERICAN ATOMIC WEAPON, JA?!
DON'T TELL HIM ANYTHING, HONEY!
SILENCE, WOMAN!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT! YOU'LL GET NOTHING FROM ME, FIEND!
AH, BUT I WILL, I WILL! I AM NOT FOOLISH ENOUGH TO THINK THAT A THREAT TO YOUR OWN LIFE, OR ANY AMOUNT OF TORTURE WOULD MAKE YOU DO MY BIDDING, BUT NONETHELESS YOU WILL HELP ME BUILD AN ATOMIC WEAPON, OR YOUR LOVELY WIFE...
...WILL DIE A HORRIBLY PAINFUL DEATH!!
NO! NOOO!!!

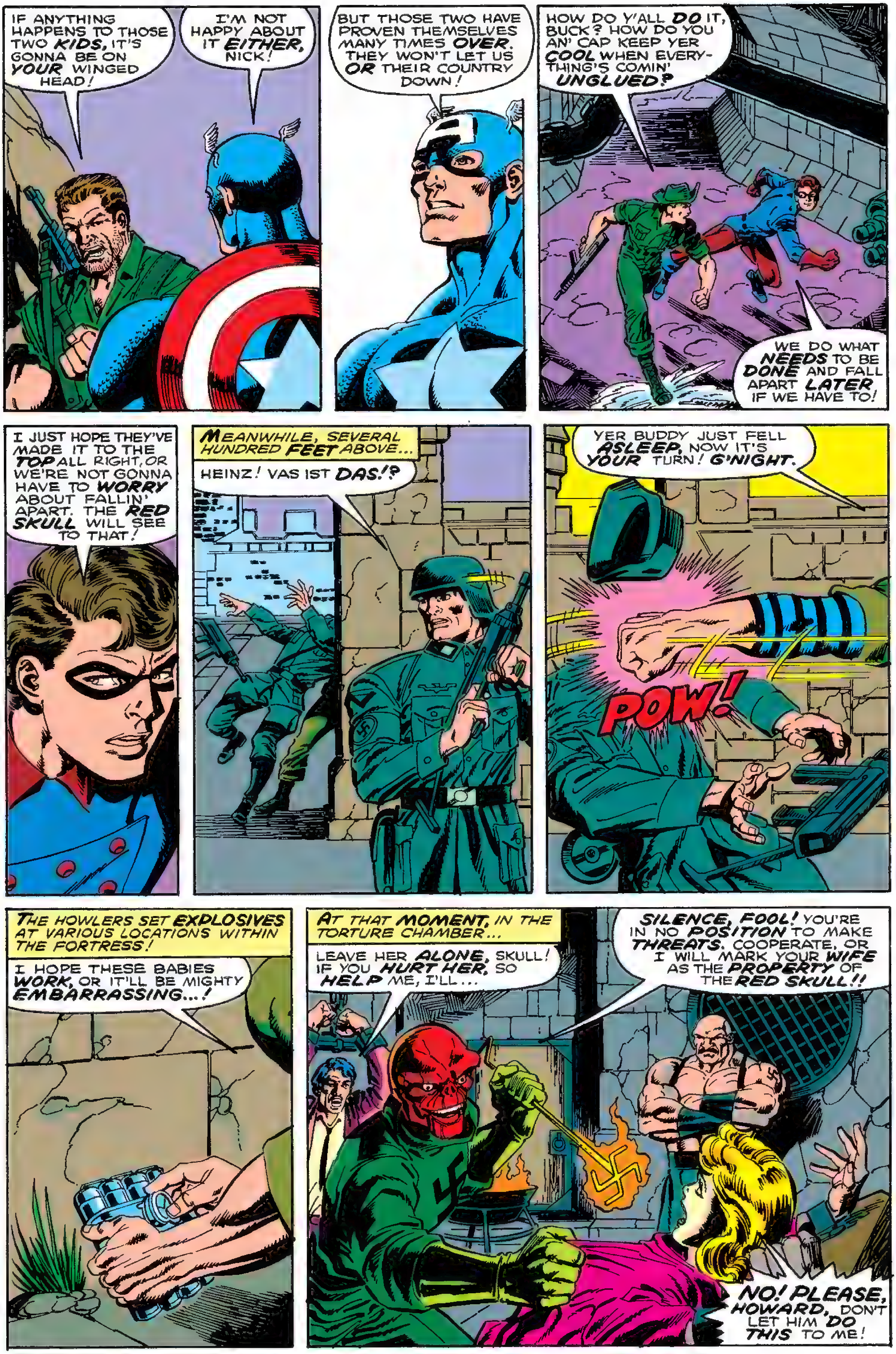

OUTSIDE, UNDER A BALEFUL MOON...
...CAPTAIN AMERICA AND THE HOWLING COMMANDOS BEGIN THE DANGEROUS ASCENT.
BE CAREFUL, MEN! THE FOG UP HERE IS GONNA MAKE THIS REAL TRICKY!
AH'VE GOT TO KEEP MAH HEAD TOGETHER! THE SARGE'S BEEN LOOKIN' AT ME MIGHTY WEIRD, HE'S AFRAID AH'M GONNA COME COMPLETELY UNRAVELED!
AH WISH AH COULD BE MORE LIKE CAP, HE NEVAH COMES UNGLUED... HOLEE JEEZ!!!
KRAK
HEEEELLPP!!
CAP! REB LOST HIS GRIP! HE'S FALLING!

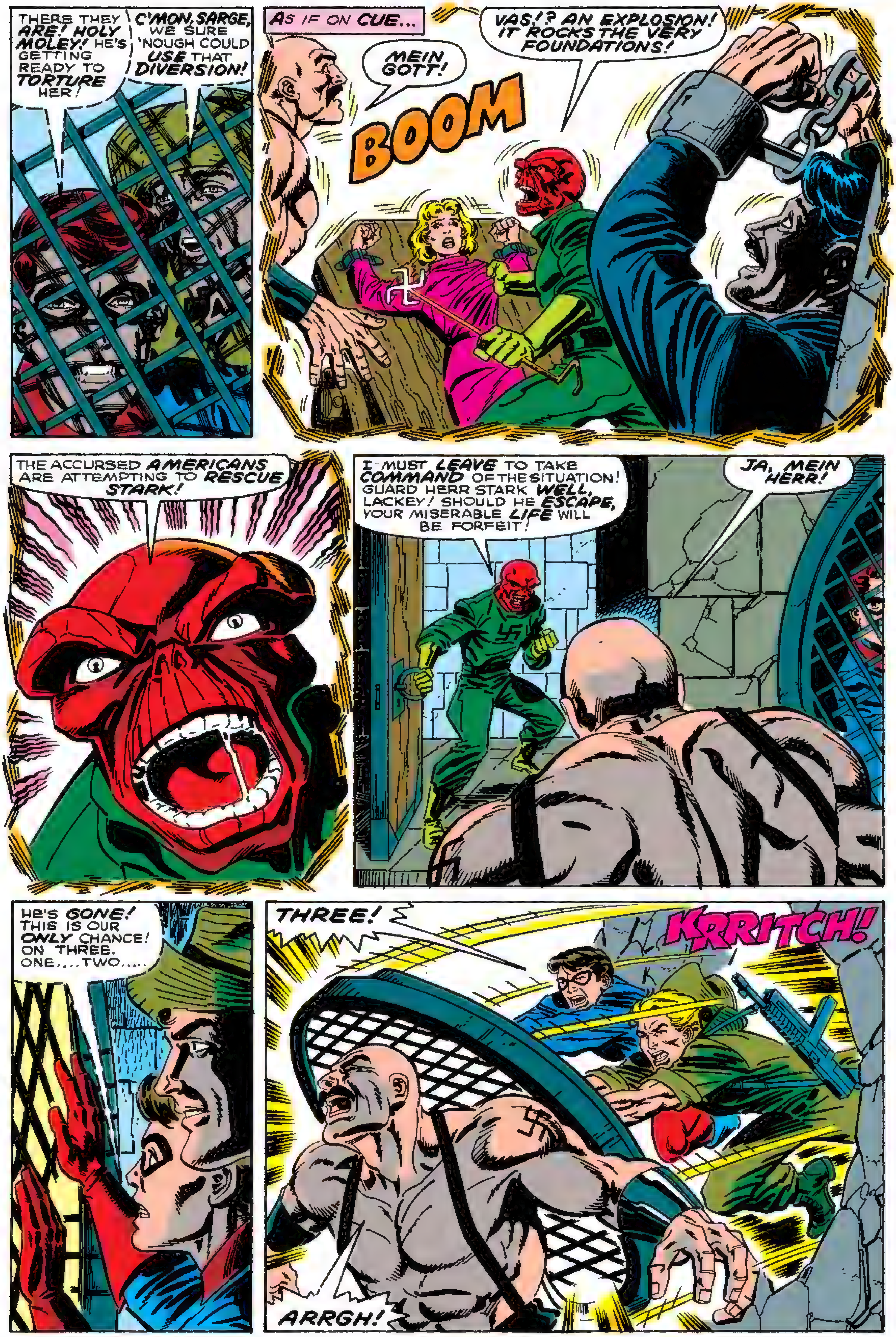
HE FEELS HIS CONSCIOUSNESS SLIP FROM HIS BODY INTO THE ABYSS!
1990...
WE'RE LOSING HIM!! PREPARE TO DEFRIBULATE!!
HIT IT!
NO RESPONSE. WE'LL TRY IT AGAIN!
ONE MORE TIME... HIT IT!
WOOOOFF!
FULL CONSCIOUSNESS RETURNS WITH A JOLT!!

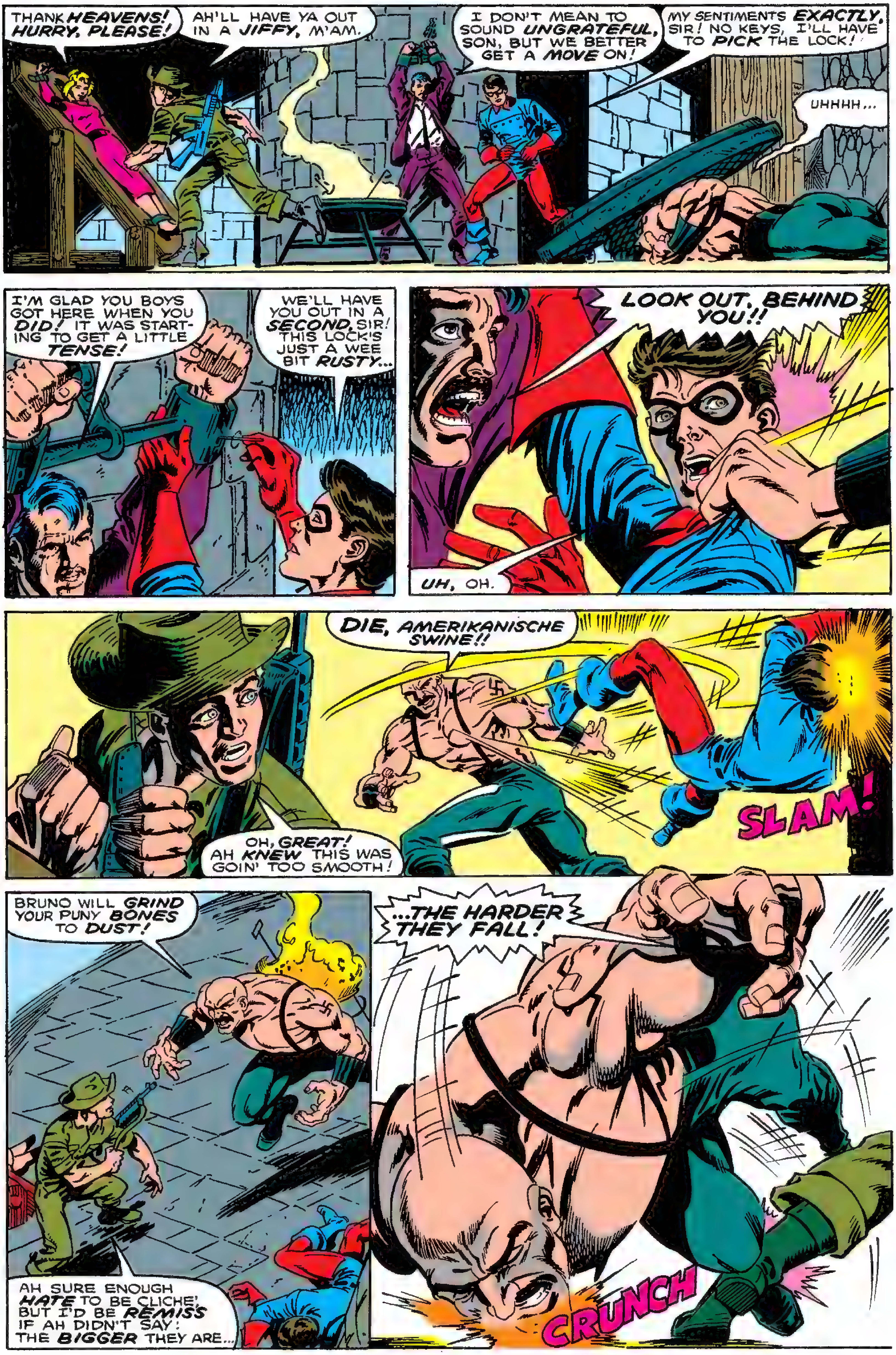

OKAY, WE'RE GETTING A GOOD SINUS RHYTHM. HE'S BACK!
WHEW! THANK GOODNESS!
UGGHH!
STUNNED, RALSTON SHAKES OFF THE EFFECT OF THE IMPACT!
OH NO, NOT AGAIN! AH'M LOSIN' MAH GRIP! CAHN'T BREATHE, CHEST FEELS LIKE AH'M TRAPPED IN A GIANT VISE... TREMBLIN' SO BAD..!
WIDE-EYED WITH FEAR, YOUNG REB IS PARALYZED!
S-SHOULDN'T HAVE LOOKED DOWN ARMS AN' LEGS LIKE ...R-RUBBER...A-AH'M NOT GONNA MAKE IT!
STAY CALM, SON. I'LL GIVE YOU A HAND! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? ANY BROKEN BONES?
NAH, JUST GOT TH' WIND KNOCKED OUTTA ME. AH RECKON YOU'RE GETTIN TIRED A' PULLIN' MAH BACON OUTTA THE FIRE!
AH'M LOSIN' MAH NERVE, CAP! AH CAME UNGLUED UNDER PRESSURE TWICE. THAT HASN'T HAPPENED SINCE MAH FIRST FIRE-FIGHT! AH WISH AH COULD BE MORE LIKE YOU.
YOU ARE LIKE ME, REB! YOU'RE AN AMERICAN RISKING HIS LIFE FOR HIS COUNTRY, GIVING HIS ALL IN THE NAME OF FREEDOM!
FROM WHERE I SIT, YOU'RE A DARN GOOD SOLDIER WHO'S HAVING A BAD DAY! IT HAPPENS TO THE BEST OF US, SON.
YEAH, MAYBE YORE RIGHT, CAP. THANKS.
C'MON, SOLDIER, WE'VE GOT WORK TO DO!

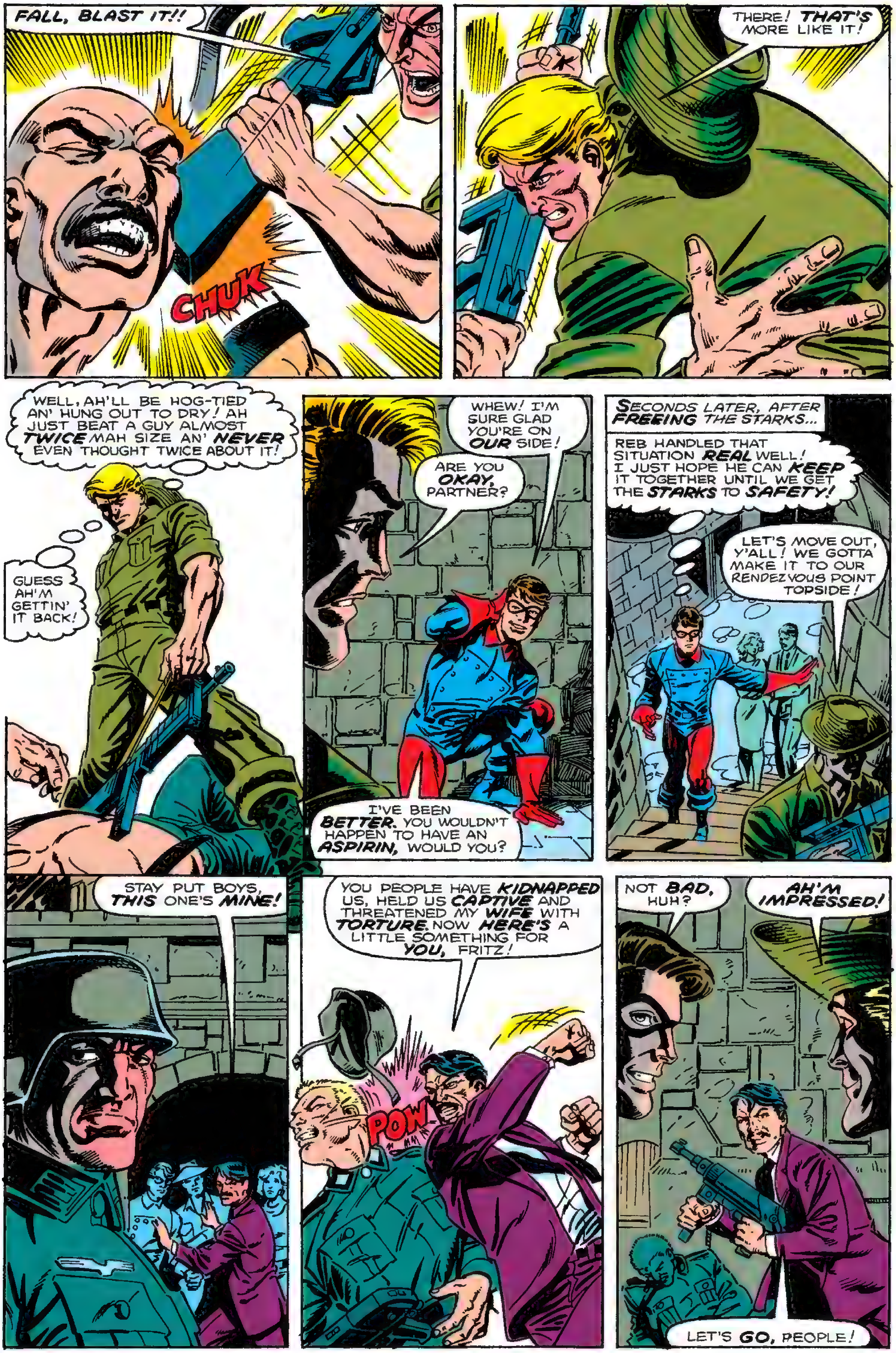

AFTER A GRUELING CLIMB...
WHAT'S WITH YA, RALSTON? YA BEEN A SCREW-UP SINCE WE STARTED THIS MISSION! MESS UP AGAIN, 'AN I'M GONNA PUT YA INNA GERMAN UNIFORM!
THIS AIR INTAKE WOULD MAKE AN EXCELLENT WAY IN.
FURY'S BEIN' KINDA ROUGH ON THE LAD. HOPE HE'LL BE OKAY!
AT EASE, FURY! WE ALL HAVE A BAD DAY FROM TIME TO TIME! BESIDES, WE GOT MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT! THIS GRATE IS 3-INCH CARBON STEEL! IT WON'T BUDGE WITHOUT EXPLOSIVES!
WE CAN'T BLOW IT OFF. THEY'LL HEAR US COMIN' AND ACE THE STARKS LONG BEFORE WE COULD GET THERE.
IF AH SURVIVE THIS, AH'M GONNA REQUEST A TRANSFER...AH SURE'S SHOOTIN' DON'T DESERVE TO BE A HOWLER!
WITHOUT A RESCUE PARTY THEY AIN'T GOTTA PRAYER!
IT'D BE THE SAME WITH A FRONTAL ASSAULT! WE GOTTA HAVE A TWO-PRONGED ATTACK, OR IT'S NO GOOD!
GENTLEMEN, I THINK I'VE GOT A SOLUTION!
WELL?
BUCK, YOU'RE WORTH DOUBLE YOUR WEIGHT IN GOLD!

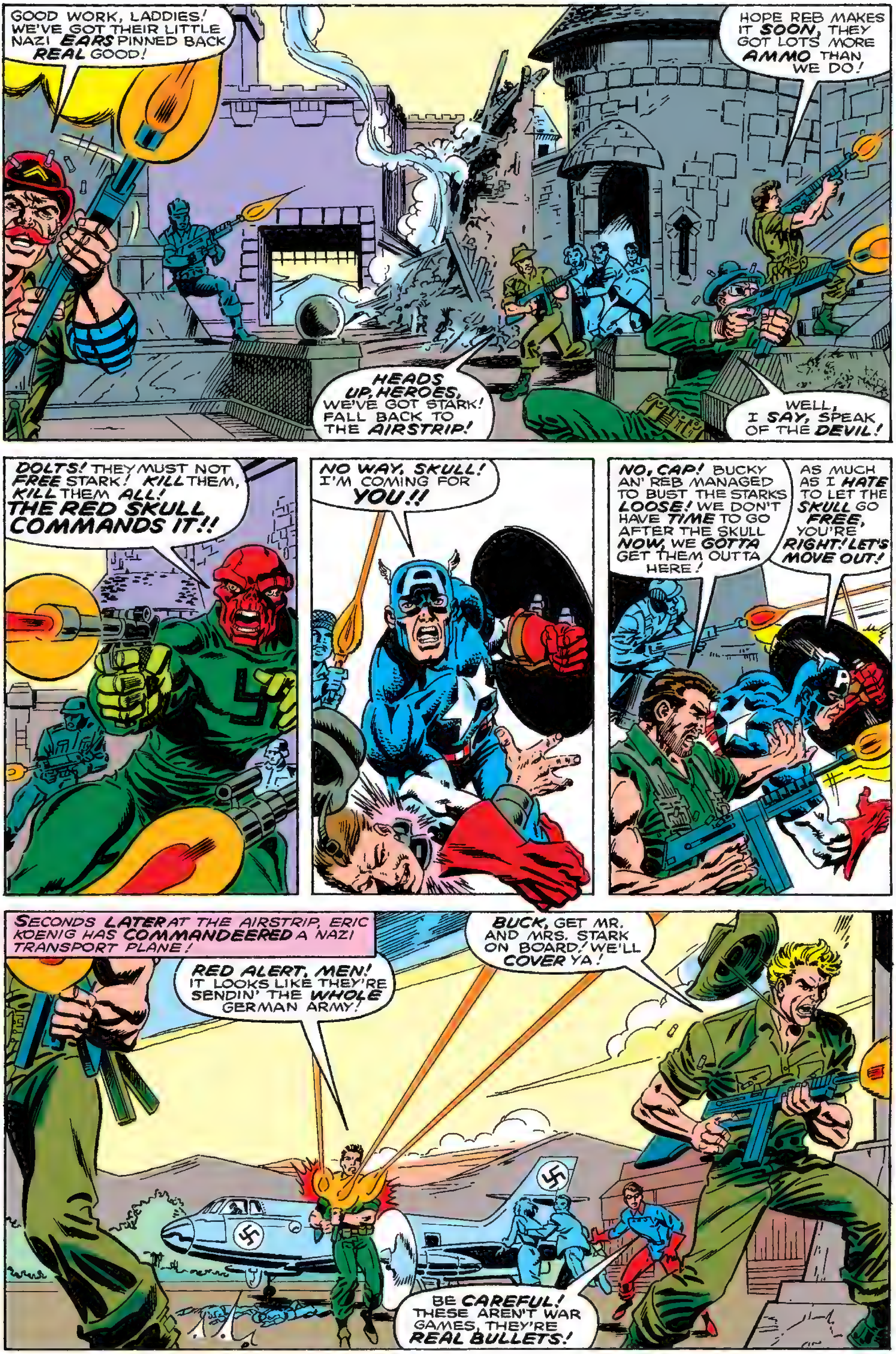

NOW WAIT ONE **COTTON-PICKIN'** MINNIT! IF YOU THINK WE'RE GONNA SEND SOME WET BEHIND TH' EARS **KID** IN THERE **ALONE**, YER **CRAZY!**
GIVE ME ANOTHER **OPTION**, SERGEANT. BUCKY'S THE ONLY ONE THAT'LL **FIT** THROUGH THAT **GRATE!**
AH, SARGE...? AH KIN SHINNY THROUGH THAT GRATE!
NO, NO, NO! NO WAY! YER SMACK IN THE **MIDDLE** OF A **BAD STREAK.** I AIN'T GONNA PUSH YER **LUCK** PAST TH' **BREAKIN'** POINT!
NICK, THERE'S NO OTHER **CHOICE!** WE'VE GOT TO RESCUE **STARK!** IF SKULL GETS THAT WEAPON, WE'RE **ALL** SUNK! THEY **HAVE** TO GO!
YEAH, YER RIGHT, BUT I **DON'T** HAFTA **LIKE** IT!
AH'M PROBABLY JUMPIN' FROM TH' **FRYIN' PAN** INTA TH' **FIRE**, BUT AH GOT **NO CHOICE!** THIS'S THE ONLY WAY AH KIN **REDEEM** MAHSELF!
WE'RE GONNA CLIMB TH' **REST** O' THE WAY AN' CREATE A **DIVERSION!** YOU TWO COVER YER **BUTTS, YA HEAR?**
YESSIR!
"GOOD LUCK..."

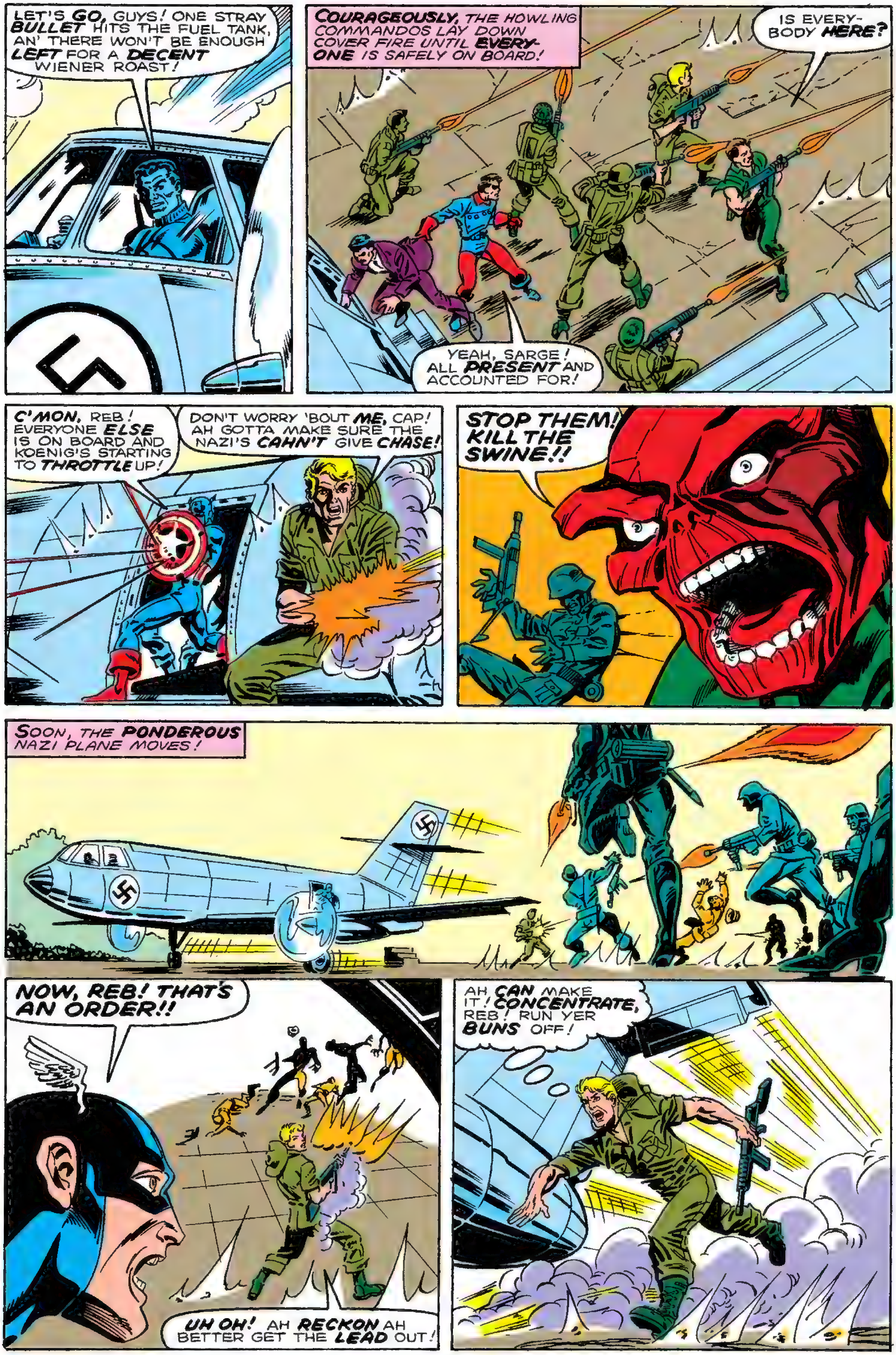

IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO THOSE TWO KIDS, IT'S GONNA BE ON YOUR WINGED HEAD!
I'M NOT HAPPY ABOUT IT EITHER, NICK!
BUT THOSE TWO HAVE PROVEN THEMSELVES MANY TIMES OVER. THEY WON'T LET US OR THEIR COUNTRY DOWN!
HOW DO Y'ALL DO IT, BUCK? HOW DO YOU AN' CAP KEEP YER COOL WHEN EVERY-THING'S COMIN' UNGLUED?
WE DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE AND FALL APART LATER, IF WE HAVE TO!
I JUST HOPE THEY'VE MADE IT TO THE TOP ALL RIGHT, OR WE'RE NOT GONNA HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT FALLIN' APART. THE RED SKULL WILL SEE TO THAT!
MEANWHILE, SEVERAL HUNDRED FEET ABOVE...
HEINZ! VAS IST DAS!?
YER BUDDY JUST FELL ASLEEP. NOW IT'S YOUR TURN! G'NIGHT.
POW!
THE HOWLERS SET EXPLOSIVES AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS WITHIN THE FORTRESS!
I HOPE THESE BABIES WORK, OR IT'LL BE MIGHTY EMBARRASSING...!
AT THAT MOMENT, IN THE TORTURE CHAMBER...
LEAVE HER ALONE, SKULL! IF YOU HURT HER, SO HELP ME, I'LL...
SILENCE, FOOL! YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO MAKE THREATS. COOPERATE, OR I WILL MARK YOUR WIFE AS THE PROPERTY OF THE RED SKULL!!
NO! PLEASE, HOWARD, DON'T LET HIM DO THIS TO ME!

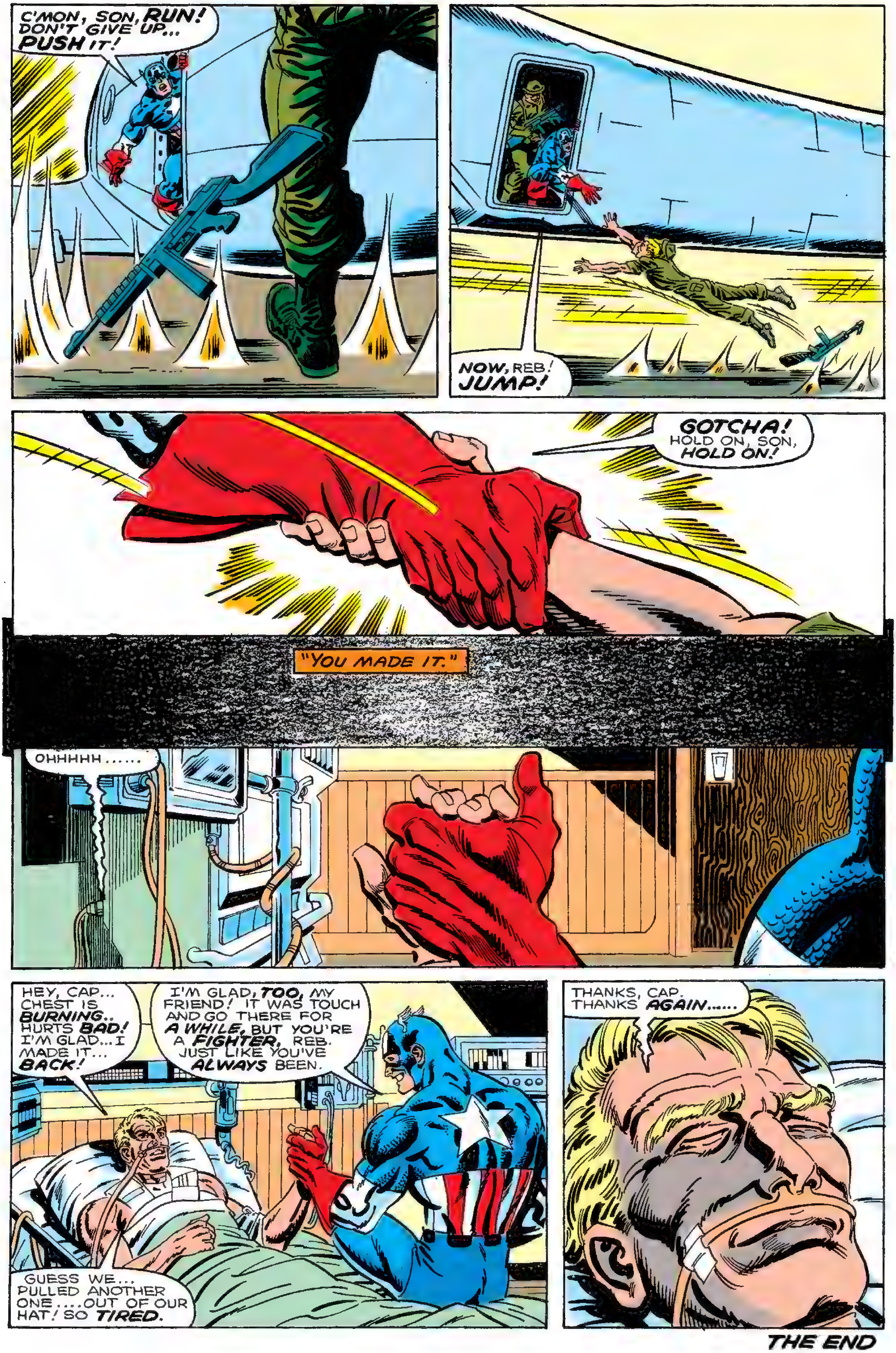

THERE THEY ARE! HOLY MOLEY! HE'S GETTING READY TO TORTURE HER!
C'MON, SARGE, WE SURE 'NOUGH COULD USE THAT DIVERSION!
AS IF ON CUE...
MEIN GOTT!
VAS!? AN EXPLOSION! IT ROCKS THE VERY FOUNDATIONS!
BOOM
THE ACCURSED AMERICANS ARE ATTEMPTING TO RESCUE STARK!
I MUST LEAVE TO TAKE COMMAND OF THE SITUATION! GUARD HERR STARK WELL, LACKEY! SHOULD HE ESCAPE, YOUR MISERABLE LIFE WILL BE FORFEIT!
JA, MEIN HERR!
HE'S GONE! THIS IS OUR ONLY CHANCE! ON THREE. ONE.... TWO.....
THREE!
KRRITCH!
ARRGH!

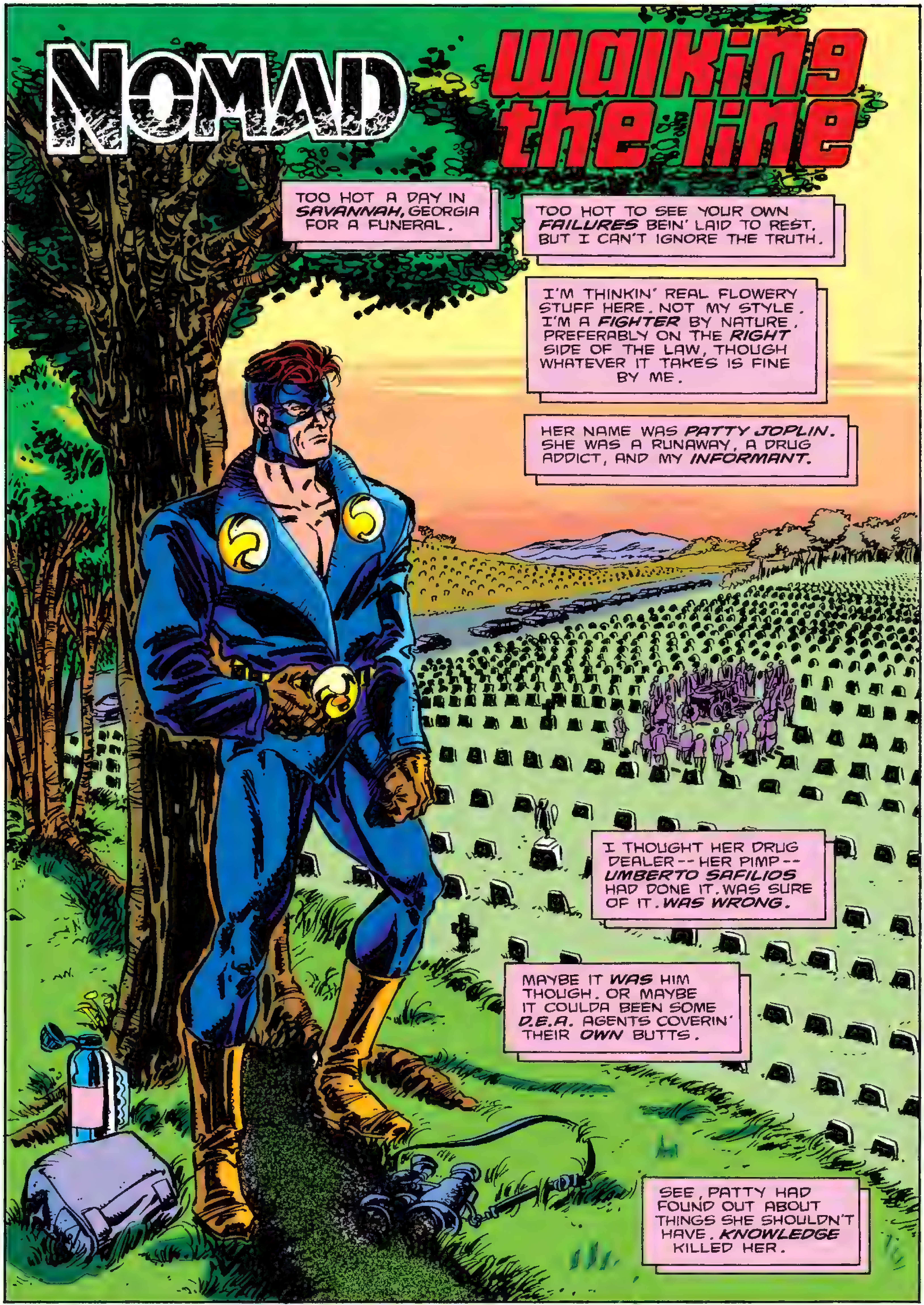

THANK HEAVENS! HURRY, PLEASE!
AH'LL HAVE YA OUT IN A JIFFY, M'AM.
I DON'T MEAN TO SOUND UNGRATEFUL, SON, BUT WE BETTER GET A MOVE ON!
MY SENTIMENTS EXACTLY, SIR! NO KEYS, I'LL HAVE TO PICK THE LOCK!
UHHHH...
I'M GLAD YOU BOYS GOT HERE WHEN YOU DID! IT WAS STARTING TO GET A LITTLE TENSE!
WE'LL HAVE YOU OUT IN A SECOND, SIR! THIS LOCK'S JUST A WEE BIT RUSTY...
LOOK OUT, BEHIND YOU!!
UH, OH.
DIE, AMERIKANISCHE SWINE!!
OH, GREAT! AH KNEW THIS WAS GOIN' TOO SMOOTH!
SLAM!
BRUNO WILL GRIND YOUR PUNY BONES TO DUST!
AH SURE ENOUGH HATE TO BE CLICHE', BUT I'D BE REMISS IF AH DIDN'T SAY: THE BIGGER THEY ARE...
...THE HARDER THEY FALL!
CRUNCH


FALL, BLAST IT!!
CHUK
THERE! THAT'S MORE LIKE IT!
WELL, AH'LL BE HOG-TIED AN' HUNG OUT TO DRY! AH JUST BEAT A GUY ALMOST TWICE MAH SIZE AN' NEVER EVEN THOUGHT TWICE ABOUT IT!
GUESS AH'M GETTIN' IT BACK!
WHEW! I'M SURE GLAD YOU'RE ON OUR SIDE!
ARE YOU OKAY, PARTNER?
I'VE BEEN BETTER. YOU WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO HAVE AN ASPIRIN, WOULD YOU?
SECONDS LATER, AFTER FREEING THE STARKS...
REB HANDLED THAT SITUATION REAL WELL! I JUST HOPE HE CAN KEEP IT TOGETHER UNTIL WE GET THE STARKS TO SAFETY!
LET'S MOVE OUT, Y'ALL! WE GOTTA MAKE IT TO OUR RENDEZVOUS POINT TOPSIDE!
STAY PUT BOYS, THIS ONE'S MINE!
YOU PEOPLE HAVE KIDNAPPED US, HELD US CAPTIVE AND THREATENED MY WIFE WITH TORTURE. NOW HERE'S A LITTLE SOMETHING FOR YOU, FRITZ!
POW
NOT BAD, HUH?
AH'M IMPRESSED!
LET'S GO, PEOPLE!


GOOD WORK, LADDIES! WE'VE GOT THEIR LITTLE NAZI **EARS** PINNED BACK **REAL** GOOD!
HOPE REB MAKES IT **SOON**, THEY GOT LOTS MORE **AMMO** THAN WE DO!
HEADS UP, HEROES, WE'VE GOT STARK! FALL BACK TO THE **AIRSTRIP!**
WELL, I **SAY,** SPEAK OF THE **DEVIL!**
DOLTS! THEY MUST NOT **FREE** STARK! **KILL** THEM, **KILL** THEM **ALL! THE RED SKULL COMMANDS IT!!**
NO WAY, SKULL! I'M COMING FOR **YOU!!**
NO, CAP! BUCKY AN' REB MANAGED TO BUST THE STARKS **LOOSE!** WE DON'T HAVE **TIME** TO GO AFTER THE SKULL **NOW,** WE **GOTTA** GET THEM OUTTA HERE!
AS MUCH AS I **HATE** TO LET THE **SKULL** GO **FREE,** YOU'RE **RIGHT! LET'S MOVE OUT!**
SECONDS **LATER** AT THE AIRSTRIP, ERIC KOENIG HAS **COMMANDEERED** A NAZI TRANSPORT PLANE!
RED ALERT, MEN! IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE SENDIN' THE **WHOLE** GERMAN ARMY!
BUCK, GET MR. AND MRS. STARK ON BOARD! WE'LL **COVER** YA!
BE **CAREFUL!** THESE AREN'T WAR GAMES, THEY'RE **REAL BULLETS!**


LET'S GO, GUYS! ONE STRAY BULLET HITS THE FUEL TANK, AN' THERE WON'T BE ENOUGH LEFT FOR A DECENT WIENER ROAST!
COURAGEOUSLY, THE HOWLING COMMANDOS LAY DOWN COVER FIRE UNTIL EVERYONE IS SAFELY ON BOARD!
IS EVERYBODY HERE?
YEAH, SARGE! ALL PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR!
C'MON, REB! EVERYONE ELSE IS ON BOARD AND KOENIG'S STARTING TO THROTTLE UP!
DON'T WORRY 'BOUT ME, CAP! AH GOTTA MAKE SURE THE NAZI'S CAHN'T GIVE CHASE!
STOP THEM! KILL THE SWINE!!
SOON, THE PONDEROUS NAZI PLANE MOVES!
NOW, REB! THAT'S AN ORDER!!
UH OH! AH RECKON AH BETTER GET THE LEAD OUT!
AH CAN MAKE IT! CONCENTRATE, REB! RUN YER BUNS OFF!


C'MON, SON, RUN! DON'T GIVE UP... PUSH IT!
NOW, REB! JUMP!
GOTCHA! HOLD ON, SON, HOLD ON!
"YOU MADE IT."
OHHHHH......
HEY, CAP... CHEST IS BURNING.. HURTS BAD! I'M GLAD...I MADE IT... BACK!
I'M GLAD, TOO, MY FRIEND! IT WAS TOUCH AND GO THERE FOR A WHILE, BUT YOU'RE A FIGHTER, REB. JUST LIKE YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN.
GUESS WE... PULLED ANOTHER ONE....OUT OF OUR HAT! SO TIRED.
THANKS, CAP. THANKS AGAIN......
THE END


NOMAD
walking the line
TOO HOT A DAY IN SAVANNAH, GEORGIA FOR A FUNERAL.
TOO HOT TO SEE YOUR OWN FAILURES BEIN' LAID TO REST. BUT I CAN'T IGNORE THE TRUTH.
I'M THINKIN' REAL FLOWERY STUFF HERE. NOT MY STYLE. I'M A FIGHTER BY NATURE, PREFERABLY ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE LAW, THOUGH WHATEVER IT TAKES IS FINE BY ME.
HER NAME WAS PATTY JOPLIN. SHE WAS A RUNAWAY, A DRUG ADDICT, AND MY INFORMANT.
I THOUGHT HER DRUG DEALER -- HER PIMP -- UMBERTO SAFILIOS HAD DONE IT. WAS SURE OF IT. WAS WRONG.
MAYBE IT WAS HIM THOUGH. OR MAYBE IT COULDA BEEN SOME D.E.A. AGENTS COVERIN' THEIR OWN BUTTS.
SEE, PATTY HAD FOUND OUT ABOUT THINGS SHE SHOULDN'T HAVE. KNOWLEDGE KILLED HER.

FABIAN NICIEZA
WRITER

DON HUDSON
PENCILER

TOM MORGAN
INKER

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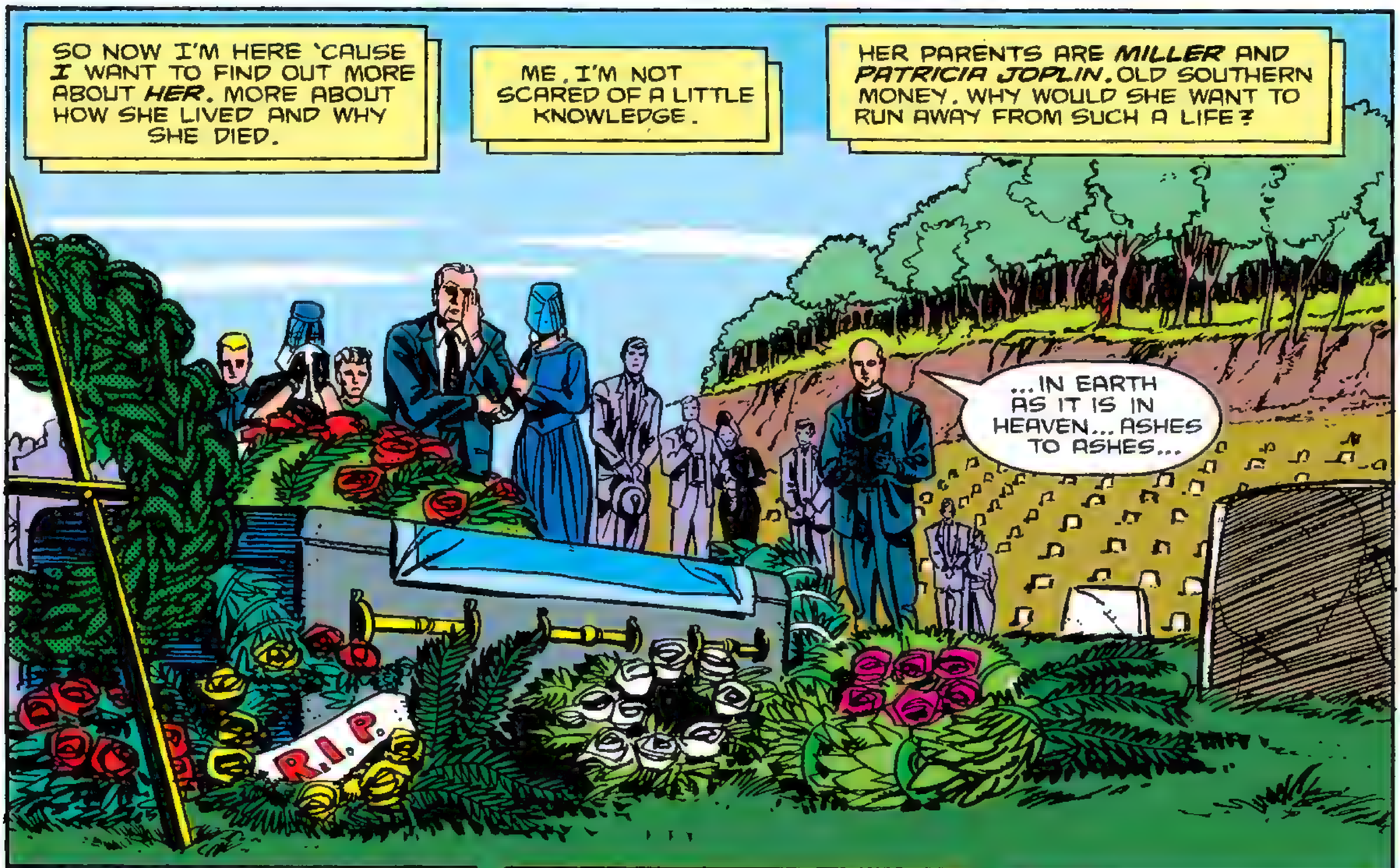
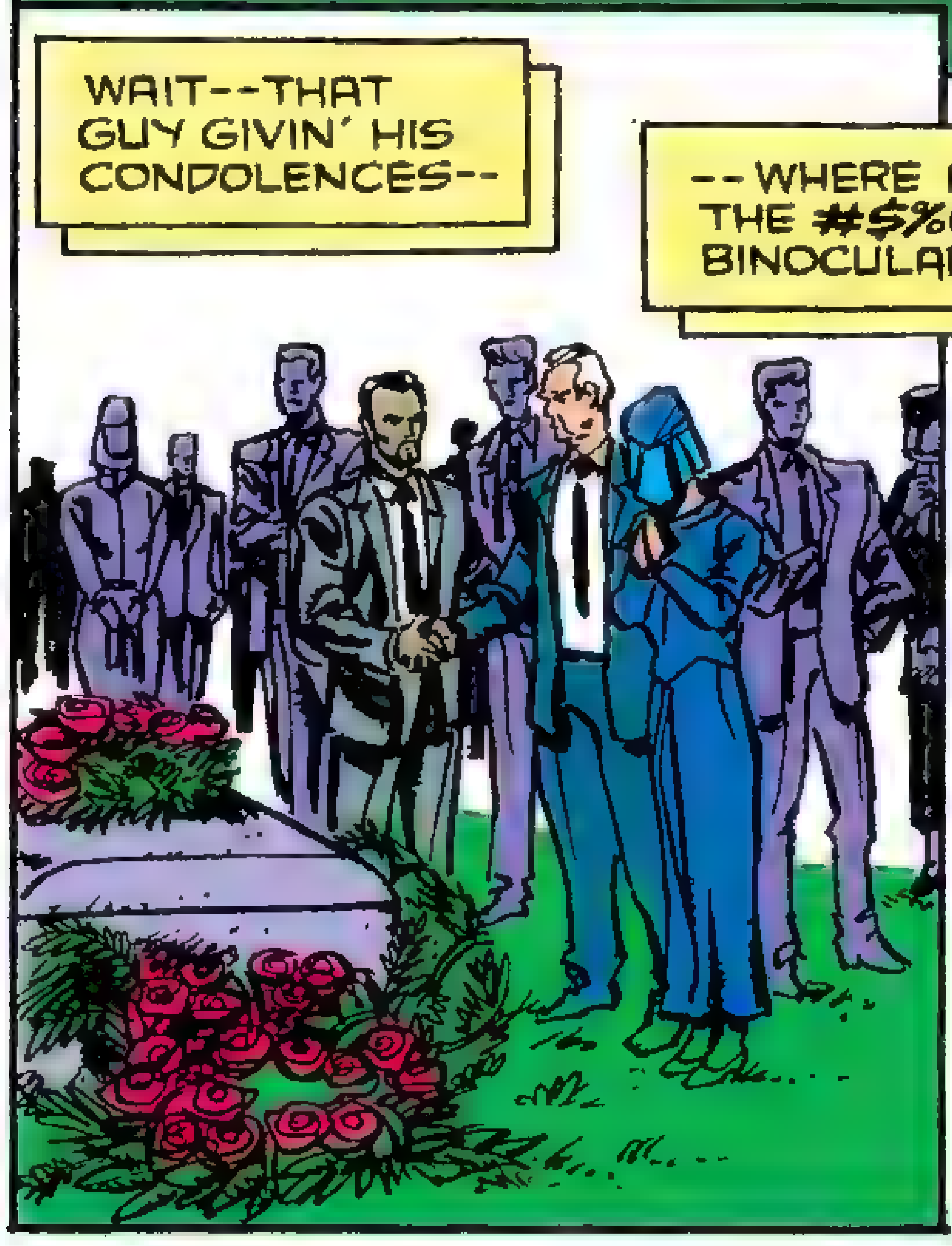
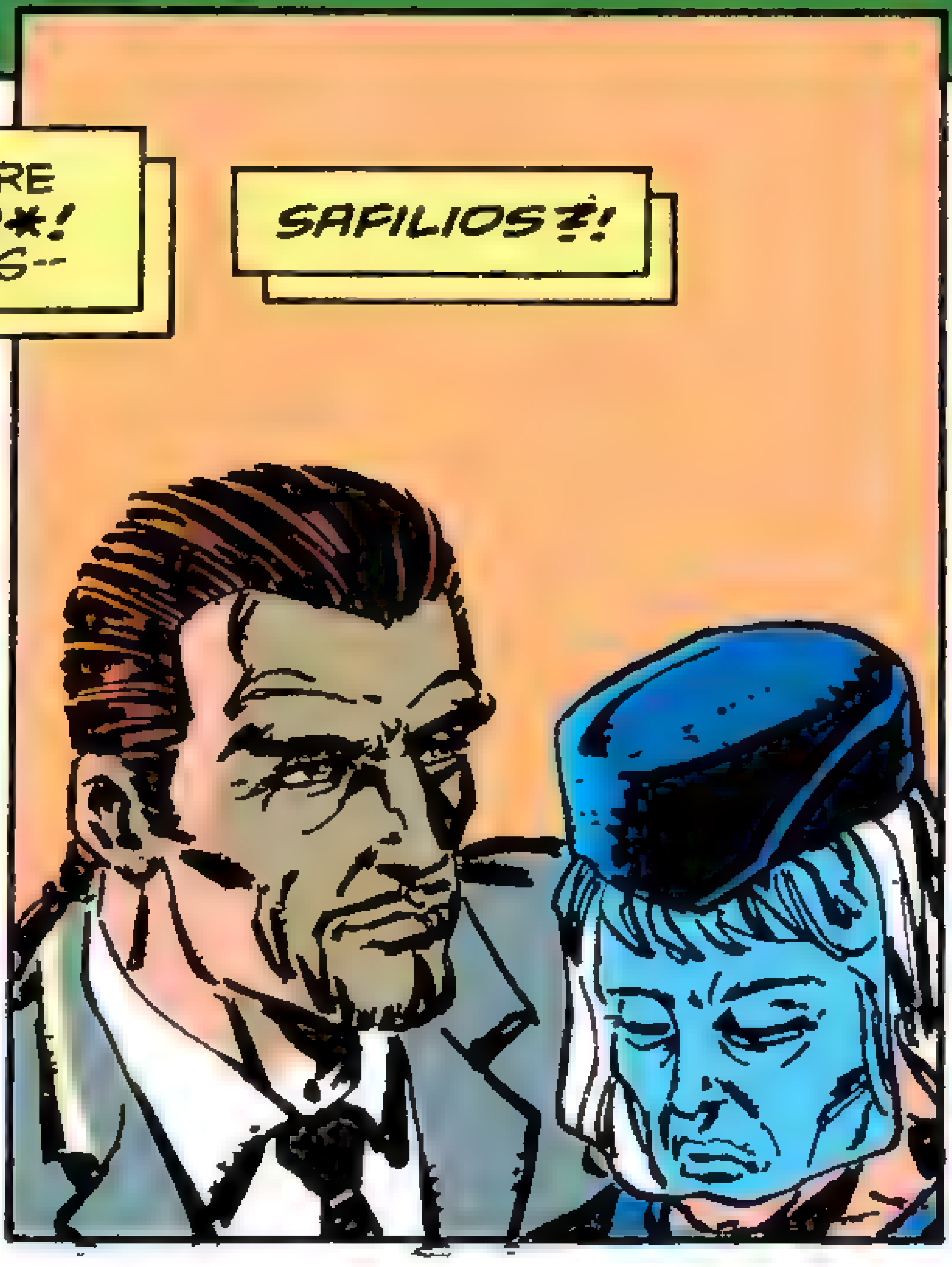
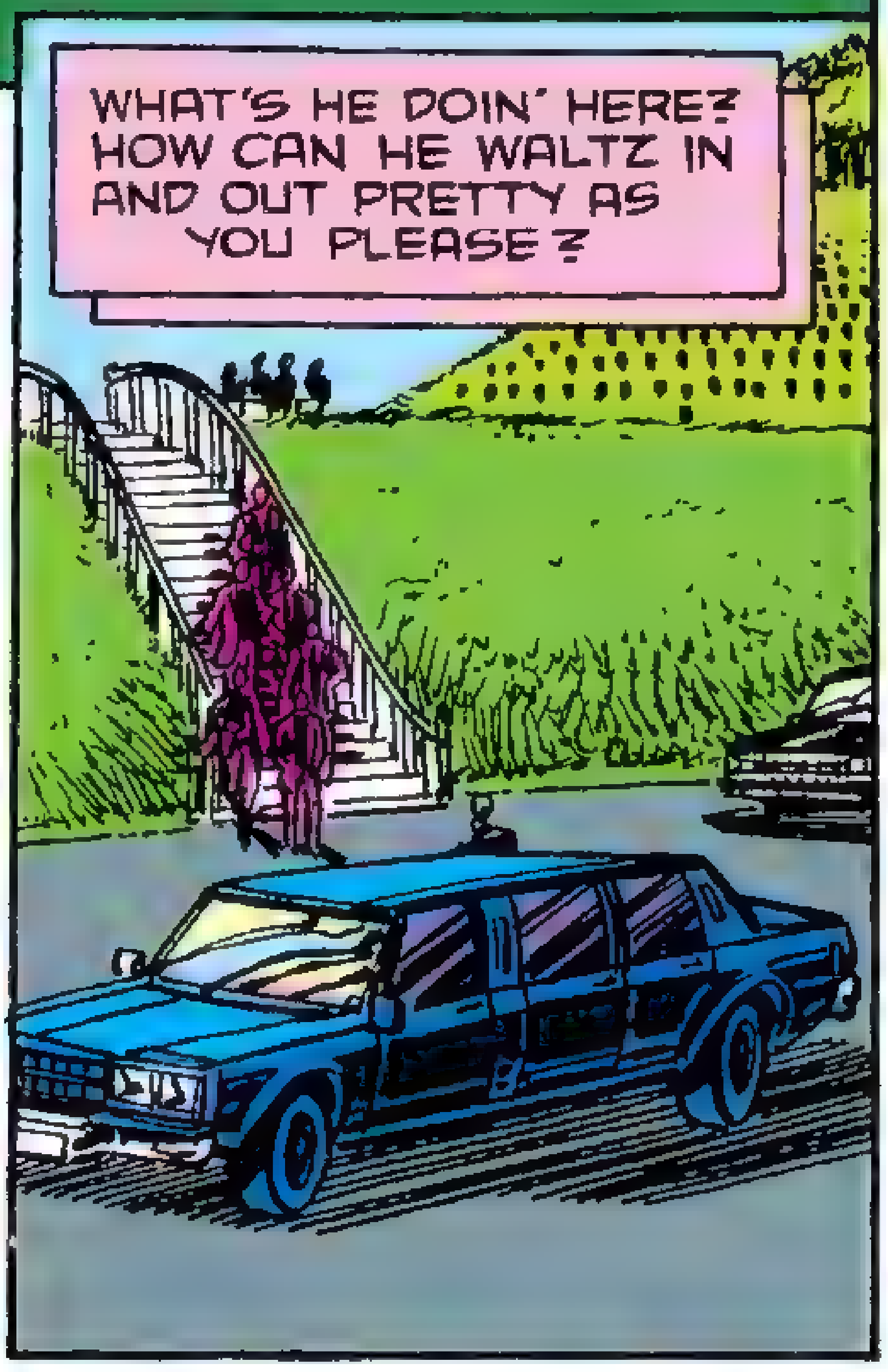
LETTERER

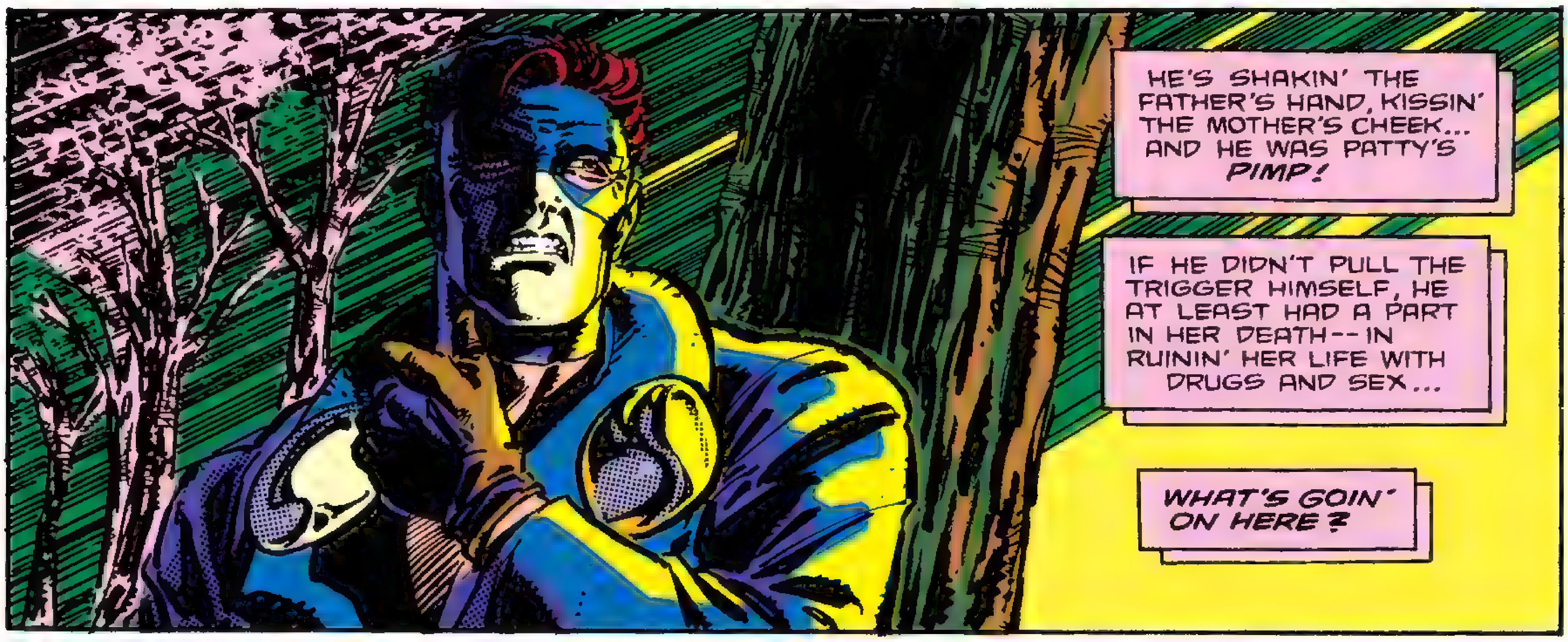
ED LAZELLARI
COLORIST

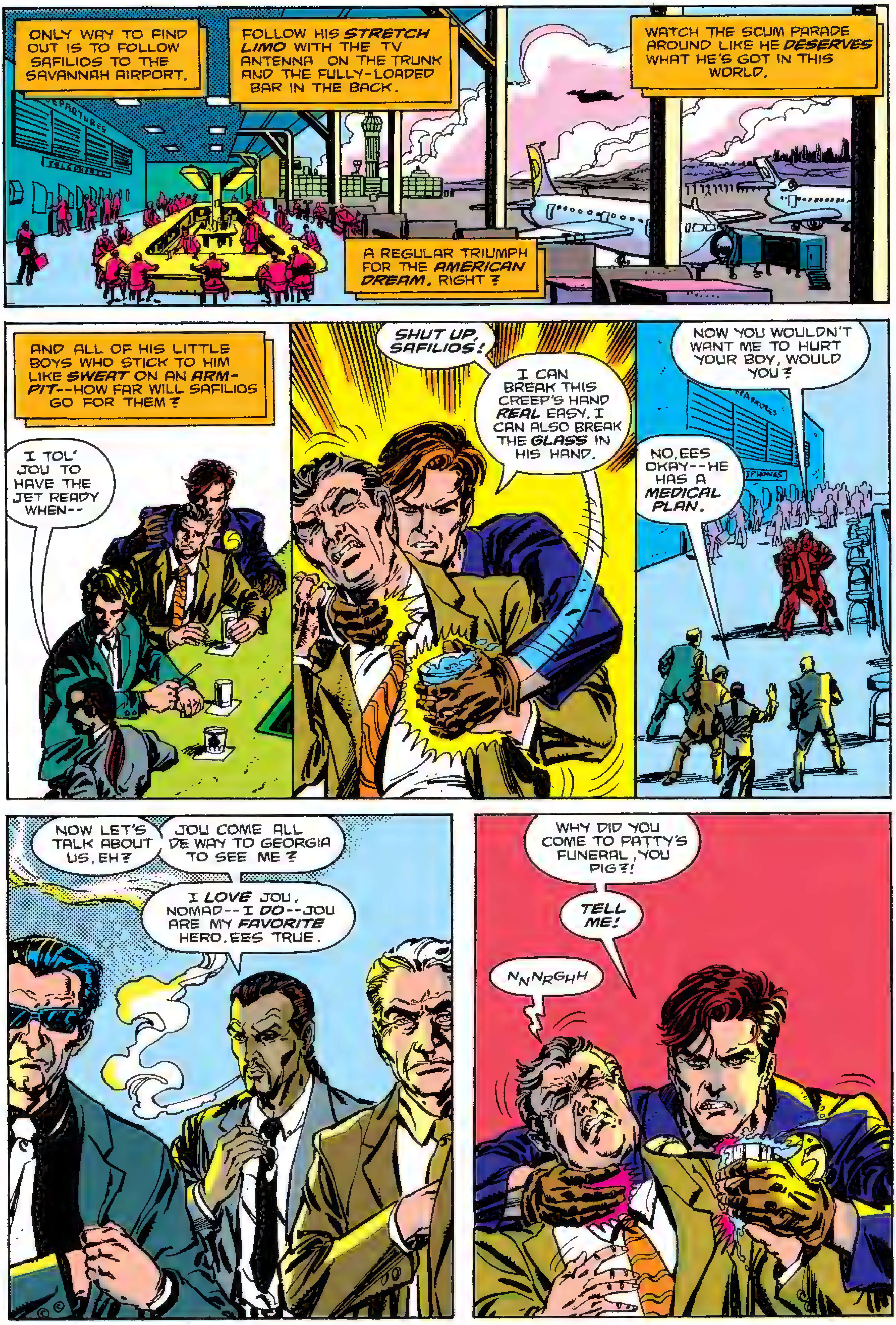

SO NOW I'M HERE 'CAUSE *I* WANT TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT *HER*. MORE ABOUT HOW SHE LIVED AND WHY SHE DIED.
ME, I'M NOT SCARED OF A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE.
HER PARENTS ARE ***MILLER*** AND ***PATRICIA JOPLIN***. OLD SOUTHERN MONEY. WHY WOULD SHE WANT TO RUN AWAY FROM SUCH A LIFE?
...IN EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN... ASHES TO ASHES...
R.I.P.

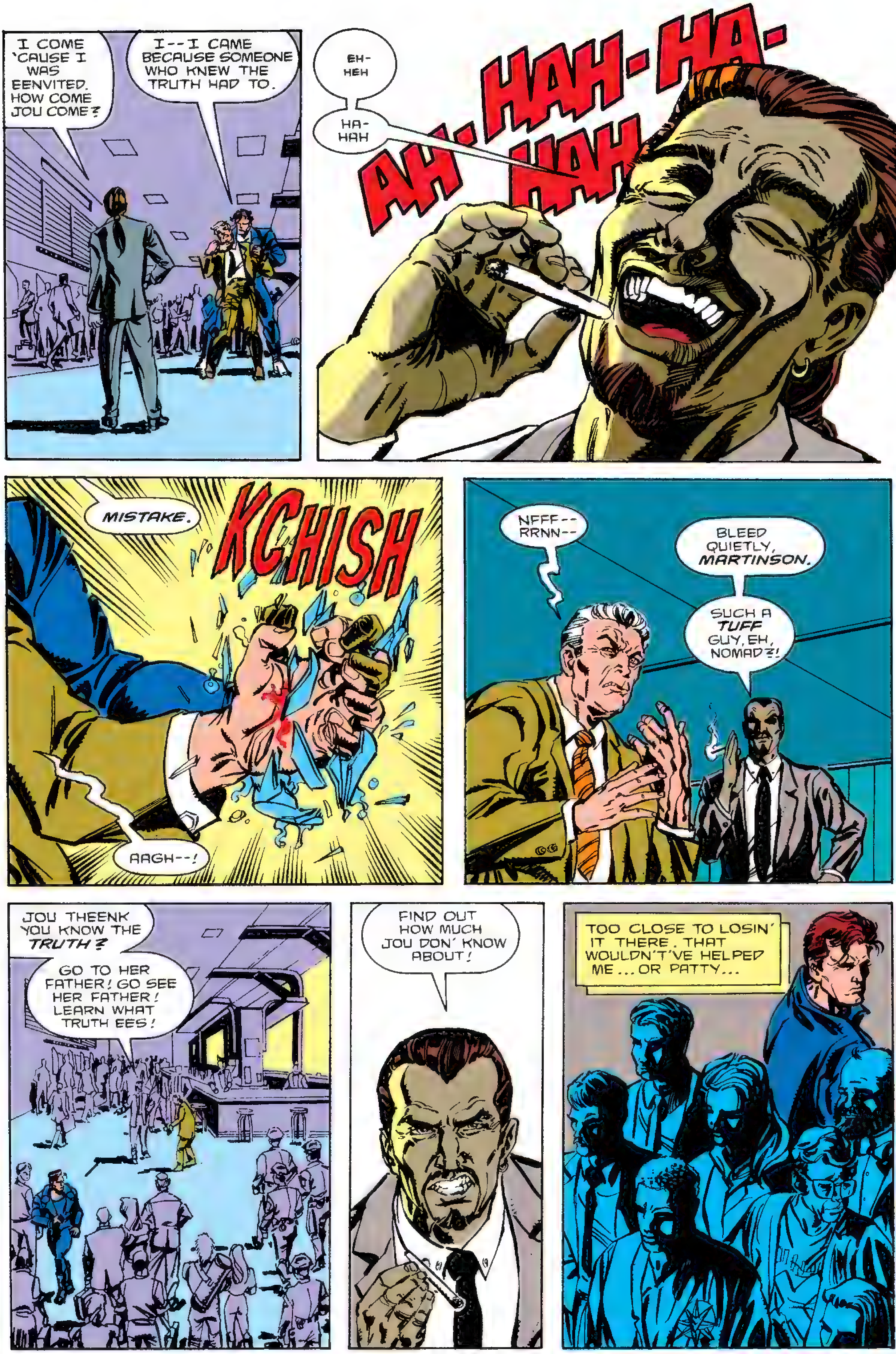

WAIT--THAT GUY GIVIN' HIS CONDOLENCES--
--WHERE ARE THE #$%@*! BINOCULARS--

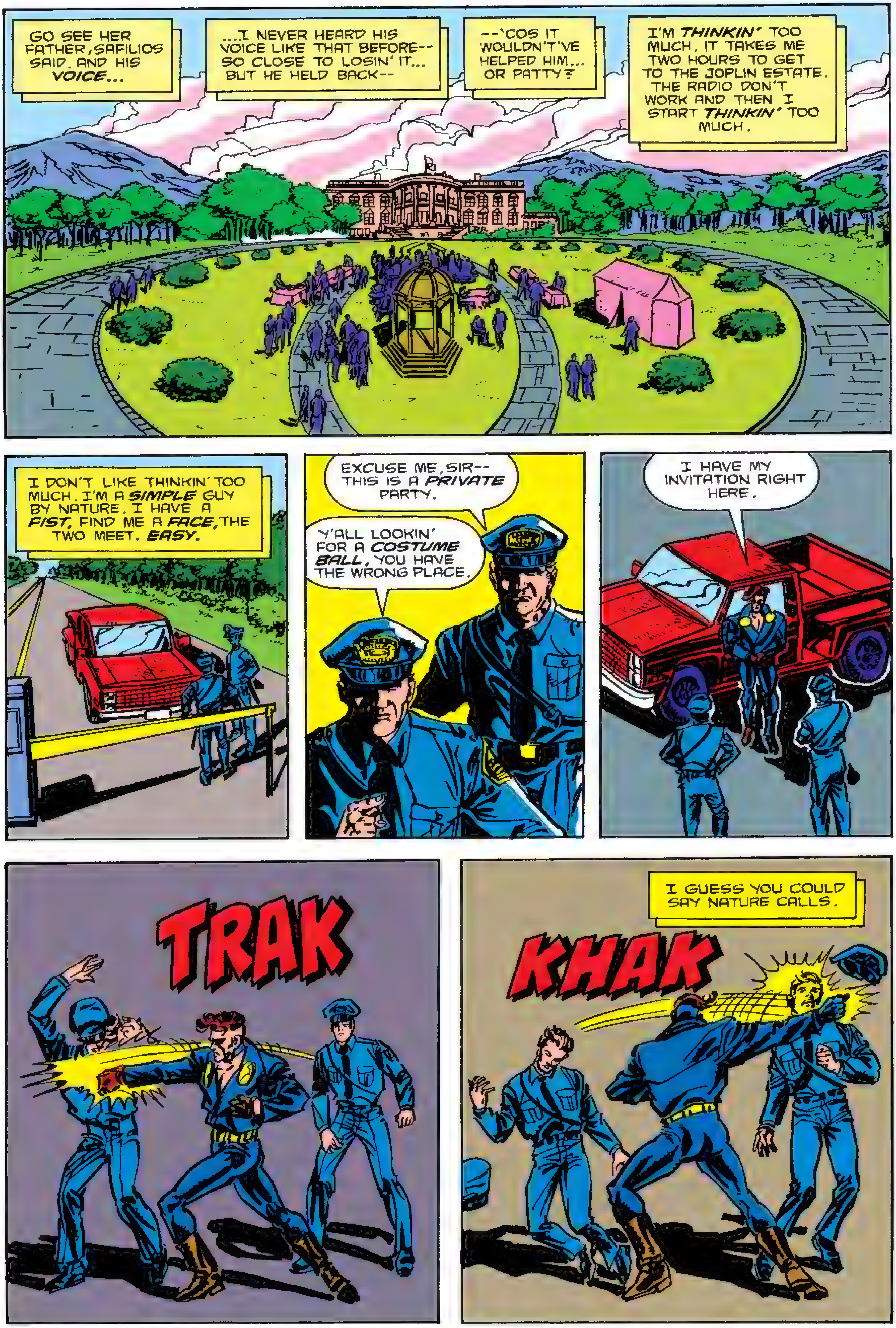

SAFILIOS?!


WHAT'S HE DOIN' HERE? HOW CAN HE WALTZ IN AND OUT PRETTY AS YOU PLEASE?

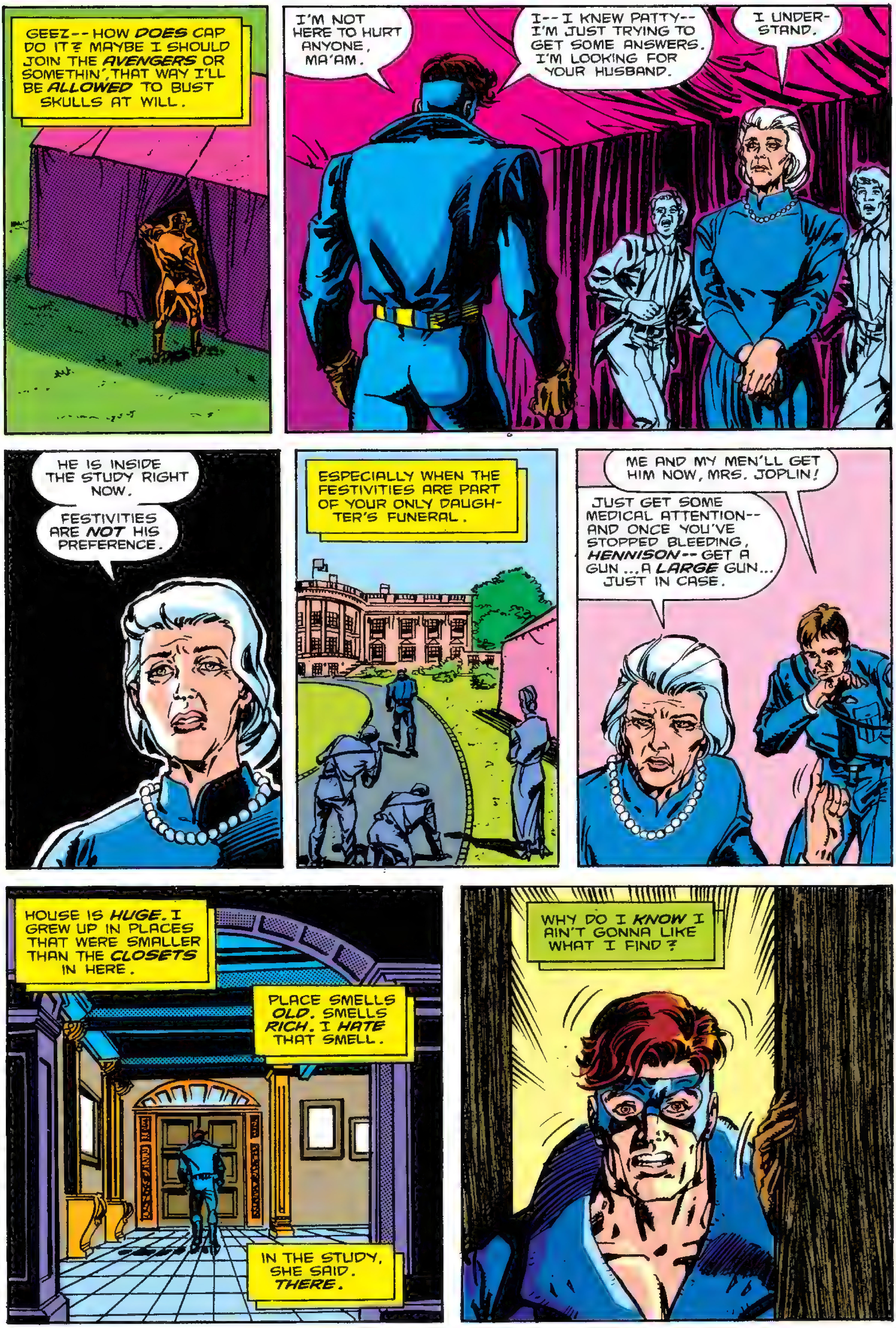

HE'S SHAKIN' THE FATHER'S HAND, KISSIN' THE MOTHER'S CHEEK... AND HE WAS PATTY'S ***PIMP!***
IF HE DIDN'T PULL THE TRIGGER HIMSELF, HE AT LEAST HAD A PART IN HER DEATH--IN RUININ' HER LIFE WITH DRUGS AND SEX...
WHAT'S GOIN' ON HERE?

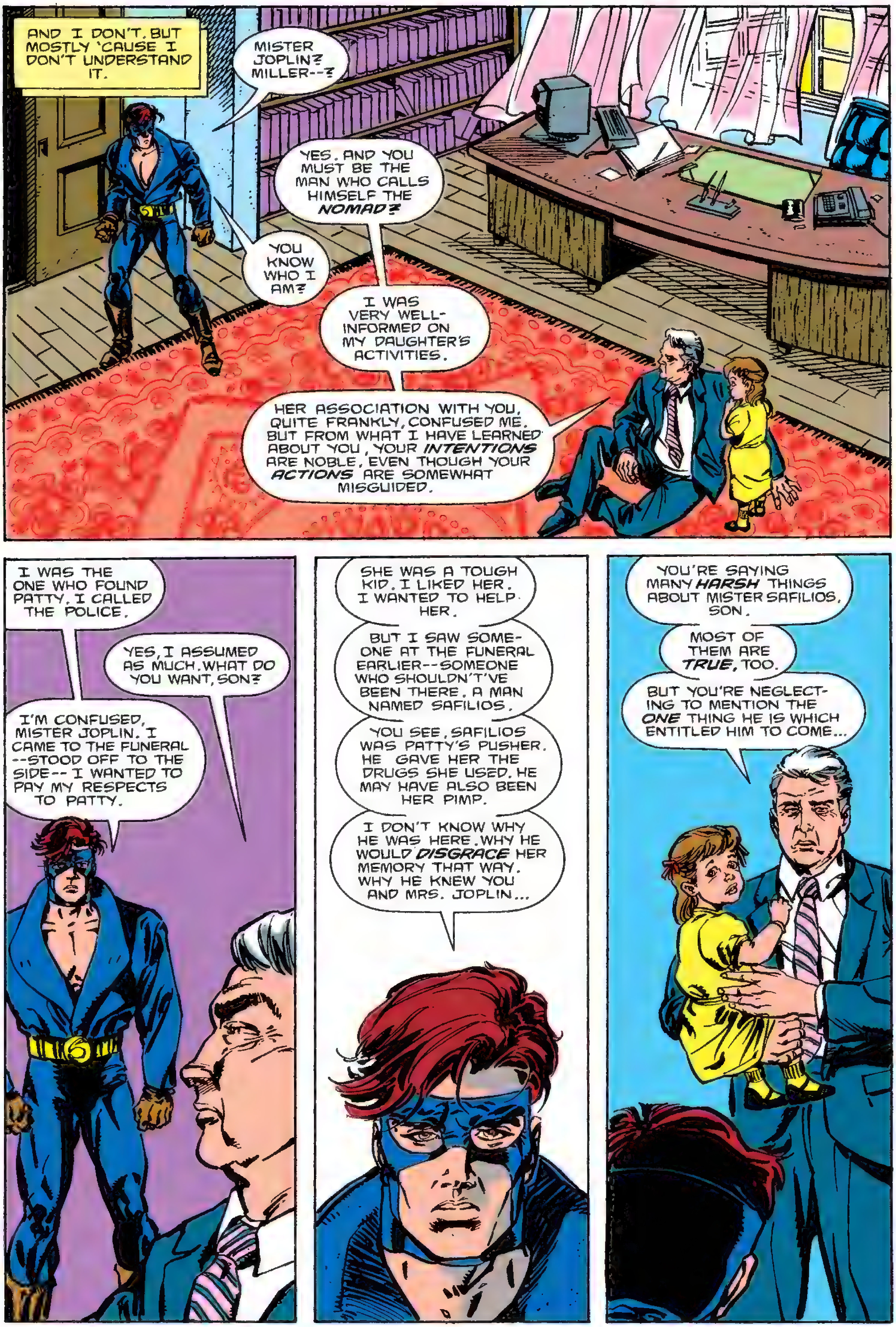

ONLY WAY TO FIND OUT IS TO FOLLOW SAFILIOS TO THE SAVANNAH AIRPORT.
FOLLOW HIS **STRETCH LIMO** WITH THE TV ANTENNA ON THE TRUNK AND THE FULLY-LOADED BAR IN THE BACK.
DEPARTURES
TELEPHONES
WATCH THE SCUM PARADE AROUND LIKE HE **DESERVES** WHAT HE'S GOT IN THIS WORLD.
A REGULAR TRIUMPH FOR THE **AMERICAN DREAM**, RIGHT?
AND ALL OF HIS LITTLE BOYS WHO STICK TO HIM LIKE **SWEAT** ON AN **ARM-PIT**--HOW FAR WILL SAFILIOS GO FOR THEM?
I TOL' JOU TO HAVE THE JET READY WHEN--
SHUT UP, SAFILIOS!
I CAN BREAK THIS CREEP'S HAND **REAL** EASY. I CAN ALSO BREAK THE **GLASS** IN HIS HAND.
NOW YOU WOULDN'T WANT ME TO HURT YOUR BOY, WOULD YOU?
NO, EES OKAY--HE HAS A **MEDICAL PLAN.**
DEPARTURES
TELEPHONES
NOW LET'S TALK ABOUT US, EH?
JOU COME ALL DE WAY TO GEORGIA TO SEE ME?
I **LOVE** JOU, NOMAD--I **DO**--JOU ARE MY **FAVORITE** HERO. EES TRUE.
WHY DID YOU COME TO PATTY'S FUNERAL, YOU PIG?!
TELL ME!
NNNRGHH

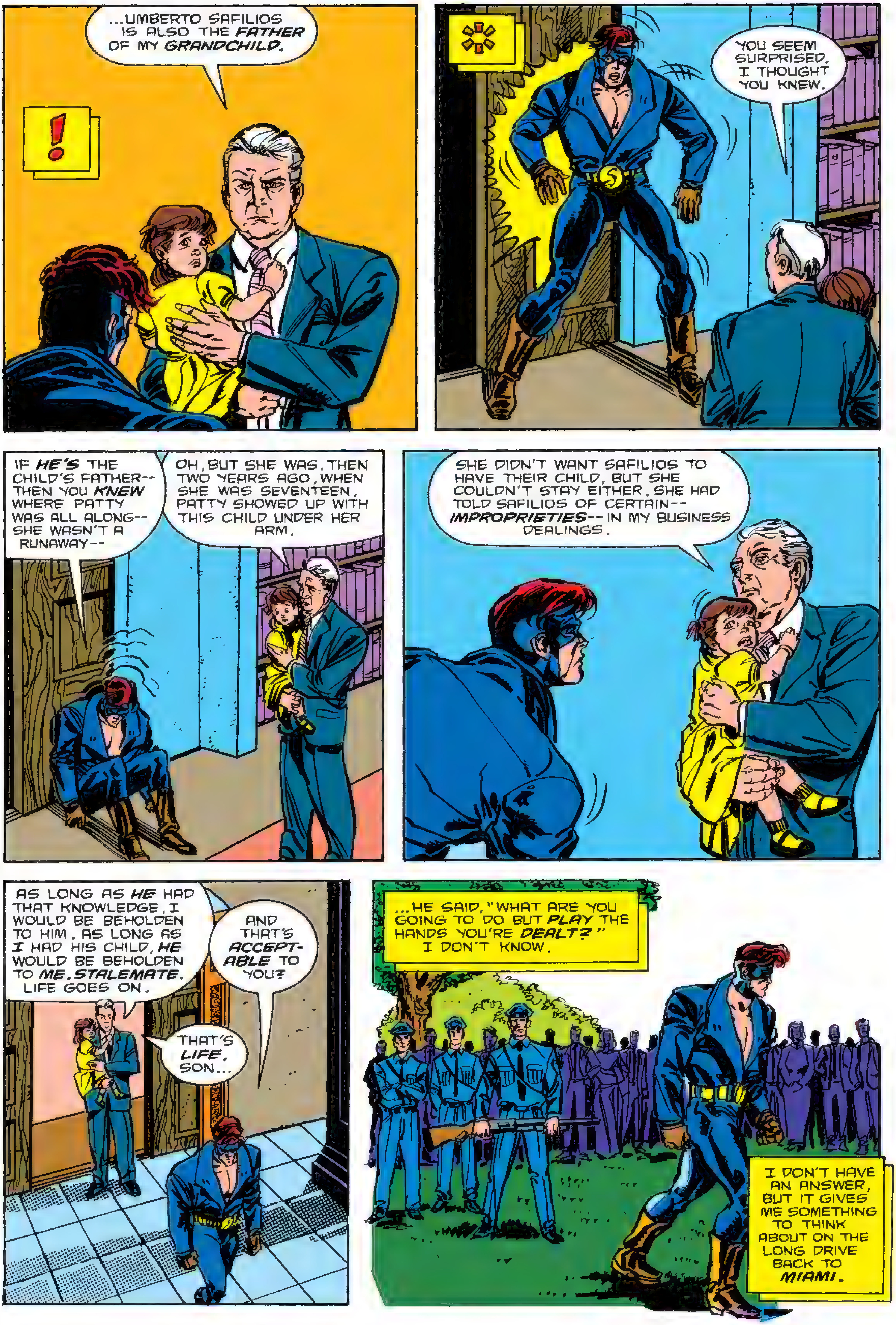

I COME 'CAUSE I WAS EENVITED. HOW COME JOU COME?
I--I CAME BECAUSE SOMEONE WHO KNEW THE TRUTH HAD TO.
EH-HEH
HA-HAH
AH-HAH-HA-HAH
MISTAKE.
KCHISH
AAGH--!
NFFF--RRNN--
BLEED QUIETLY, MARTINSON.
SUCH A TUFF GUY, EH, NOMAD?!
JOU THEENK YOU KNOW THE TRUTH?
GO TO HER FATHER! GO SEE HER FATHER! LEARN WHAT TRUTH EES!
FIND OUT HOW MUCH JOU DON' KNOW ABOUT!
TOO CLOSE TO LOSIN' IT THERE. THAT WOULDN'T'VE HELPED ME... OR PATTY...

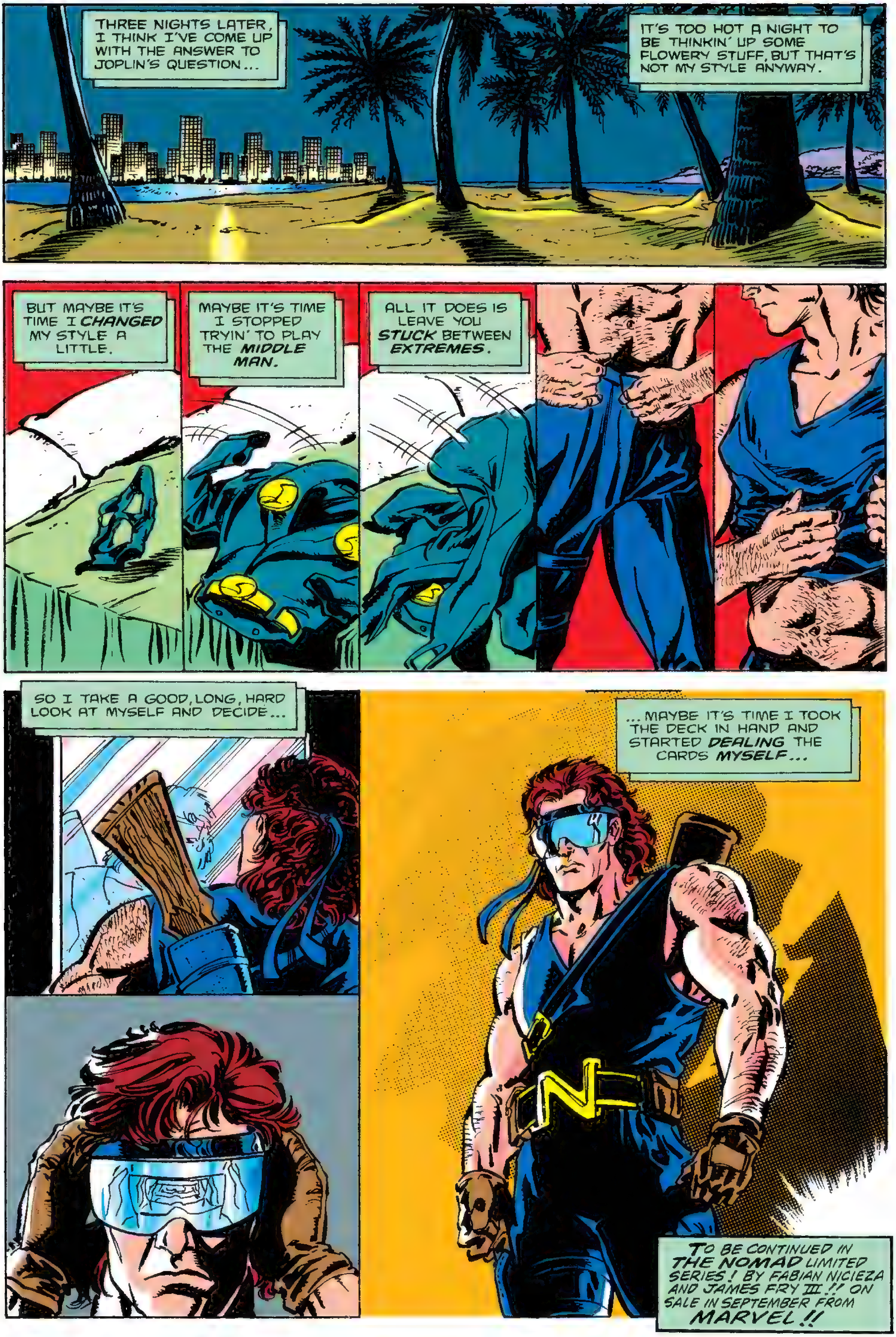

GO SEE HER FATHER, SAFILIOS SAID. AND HIS *VOICE*...
...I NEVER HEARD HIS VOICE LIKE THAT BEFORE-- SO CLOSE TO LOSIN' IT... BUT HE HELD BACK--
--'COS IT WOULDN'T'VE HELPED HIM... OR PATTY?
I'M *THINKIN'* TOO MUCH. IT TAKES ME TWO HOURS TO GET TO THE JOPLIN ESTATE. THE RADIO DON'T WORK AND THEN I START *THINKIN'* TOO MUCH.
I DON'T LIKE THINKIN' TOO MUCH. I'M A *SIMPLE* GUY BY NATURE. I HAVE A *FIST*, FIND ME A *FACE*, THE TWO MEET. *EASY.*
EXCUSE ME, SIR-- THIS IS A *PRIVATE* PARTY.
Y'ALL LOOKIN' FOR A *COSTUME BALL*, YOU HAVE THE WRONG PLACE.
I HAVE MY INVITATION RIGHT HERE.
TRAK
I GUESS YOU COULD SAY NATURE CALLS.
KHAK

SO MUCH FOR THE *SUBTLE* APPROACH.
HOW DOES *CAP* ALWAYS MANAGE TO DO THIS WITHOUT BUSTIN' HALF A DOZEN HEADS IN?
IT'S THE *HEAT* THAT DOES IT TO ME. MAKES ME *ANGRIER*.
HEY, YOU--
I'M WEARIN' A *KEVLAR* JACKET, AN' IT'S SIX HUNDRED DEGREES OUT! REGULAR *EINSTEIN*, I AM.
AS IF I HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ANY OF THESE RENT-A-COPS NAILIN' ME WITH A GUNSHOT!
SO WHILE SPEEDY GONZALEZ IS TRYIN' TO FIGURE OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS PALS...
CHAK
OKAY, SO NOW I THINK PEOPLE HAVE NOTICED ME.
AN' THEY'LL CALL THE COPS. AN' THAT'LL BE *ANOTHER* STATE I HAVE AN OUTSTANDING WARRANT IN.


GEEZ--HOW *DOES* CAP DO IT? MAYBE I SHOULD JOIN THE *AVENGERS* OR SOMETHIN'. THAT WAY I'LL BE *ALLOWED* TO BUST SKULLS AT WILL.
I'M NOT HERE TO HURT ANYONE, MA'AM.
I--I KNEW PATTY--I'M JUST TRYING TO GET SOME ANSWERS. I'M LOOKING FOR YOUR HUSBAND.
I UNDERSTAND.
HE IS INSIDE THE STUDY RIGHT NOW.
FESTIVITIES ARE *NOT* HIS PREFERENCE.
ESPECIALLY WHEN THE FESTIVITIES ARE PART OF YOUR ONLY DAUGHTER'S FUNERAL.
ME AND MY MEN'LL GET HIM NOW, MRS. JOPLIN!
JUST GET SOME MEDICAL ATTENTION--AND ONCE YOU'VE STOPPED BLEEDING, *HENNISON*--GET A GUN...A *LARGE* GUN... JUST IN CASE.
HOUSE IS *HUGE*. I GREW UP IN PLACES THAT WERE SMALLER THAN THE *CLOSETS* IN HERE.
PLACE SMELLS *OLD*. SMELLS *RICH*. I *HATE* THAT SMELL.
IN THE STUDY, SHE SAID. *THERE*.
WHY DO I *KNOW* I AIN'T GONNA LIKE WHAT I FIND?


AND I DON'T. BUT MOSTLY 'CAUSE I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT.
MISTER JOPLIN? MILLER--?
YES. AND YOU MUST BE THE MAN WHO CALLS HIMSELF THE *NOMAD?*
YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
I WAS VERY WELL-INFORMED ON MY DAUGHTER'S ACTIVITIES.
HER ASSOCIATION WITH YOU, QUITE FRANKLY, CONFUSED ME. BUT FROM WHAT I HAVE LEARNED ABOUT YOU, YOUR *INTENTIONS* ARE NOBLE, EVEN THOUGH YOUR *ACTIONS* ARE SOMEWHAT MISGUIDED.
I WAS THE ONE WHO FOUND PATTY. I CALLED THE POLICE.
YES, I ASSUMED AS MUCH. WHAT DO YOU WANT, SON?
I'M CONFUSED, MISTER JOPLIN. I CAME TO THE FUNERAL --STOOD OFF TO THE SIDE-- I WANTED TO PAY MY RESPECTS TO PATTY.
SHE WAS A TOUGH KID. I LIKED HER. I WANTED TO HELP HER.
BUT I SAW SOMEONE AT THE FUNERAL EARLIER--SOMEONE WHO SHOULDN'T'VE BEEN THERE. A MAN NAMED SAFILIOS.
YOU SEE, SAFILIOS WAS PATTY'S PUSHER. HE GAVE HER THE DRUGS SHE USED. HE MAY HAVE ALSO BEEN HER PIMP.
I DON'T KNOW WHY HE WAS HERE. WHY HE WOULD *DISGRACE* HER MEMORY THAT WAY. WHY HE KNEW YOU AND MRS. JOPLIN...
YOU'RE SAYING MANY *HARSH* THINGS ABOUT MISTER SAFILIOS, SON.
MOST OF THEM ARE *TRUE*, TOO.
BUT YOU'RE NEGLECTING TO MENTION THE *ONE* THING HE IS WHICH ENTITLED HIM TO COME...


...UMBERTO SAFILIOS IS ALSO THE ***FATHER*** OF MY ***GRANDCHILD.***
!
YOU SEEM SURPRISED. I THOUGHT YOU KNEW.
IF ***HE'S*** THE CHILD'S FATHER-- THEN YOU ***KNEW*** WHERE PATTY WAS ALL ALONG-- SHE WASN'T A RUNAWAY--
OH, BUT SHE WAS. THEN TWO YEARS AGO, WHEN SHE WAS SEVENTEEN, PATTY SHOWED UP WITH THIS CHILD UNDER HER ARM.
SHE DIDN'T WANT SAFILIOS TO HAVE THEIR CHILD, BUT SHE COULDN'T STAY EITHER. SHE HAD TOLD SAFILIOS OF CERTAIN-- ***IMPROPRIETIES***-- IN MY BUSINESS DEALINGS.
AS LONG AS ***HE*** HAD THAT KNOWLEDGE, I WOULD BE BEHOLDEN TO HIM. AS LONG AS ***I*** HAD HIS CHILD, ***HE*** WOULD BE BEHOLDEN TO ***ME. STALEMATE.*** LIFE GOES ON.
AND THAT'S ***ACCEPTABLE*** TO YOU?
THAT'S ***LIFE***, SON...
...HE SAID, "WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO BUT ***PLAY*** THE HANDS YOU'RE ***DEALT?***" I DON'T KNOW.
I DON'T HAVE AN ANSWER, BUT IT GIVES ME SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT ON THE LONG DRIVE BACK TO ***MIAMI.***


THREE NIGHTS LATER, I THINK I'VE COME UP WITH THE ANSWER TO JOPLIN'S QUESTION...
IT'S TOO HOT A NIGHT TO BE THINKIN' UP SOME FLOWERY STUFF, BUT THAT'S NOT MY STYLE ANYWAY.
BUT MAYBE IT'S TIME I *CHANGED* MY STYLE A LITTLE.
MAYBE IT'S TIME I STOPPED TRYIN' TO PLAY THE *MIDDLE MAN.*
ALL IT DOES IS LEAVE YOU *STUCK* BETWEEN *EXTREMES.*
SO I TAKE A GOOD, LONG, HARD LOOK AT MYSELF AND DECIDE...
...MAYBE IT'S TIME I TOOK THE DECK IN HAND AND STARTED *DEALING* THE CARDS *MYSELF...*
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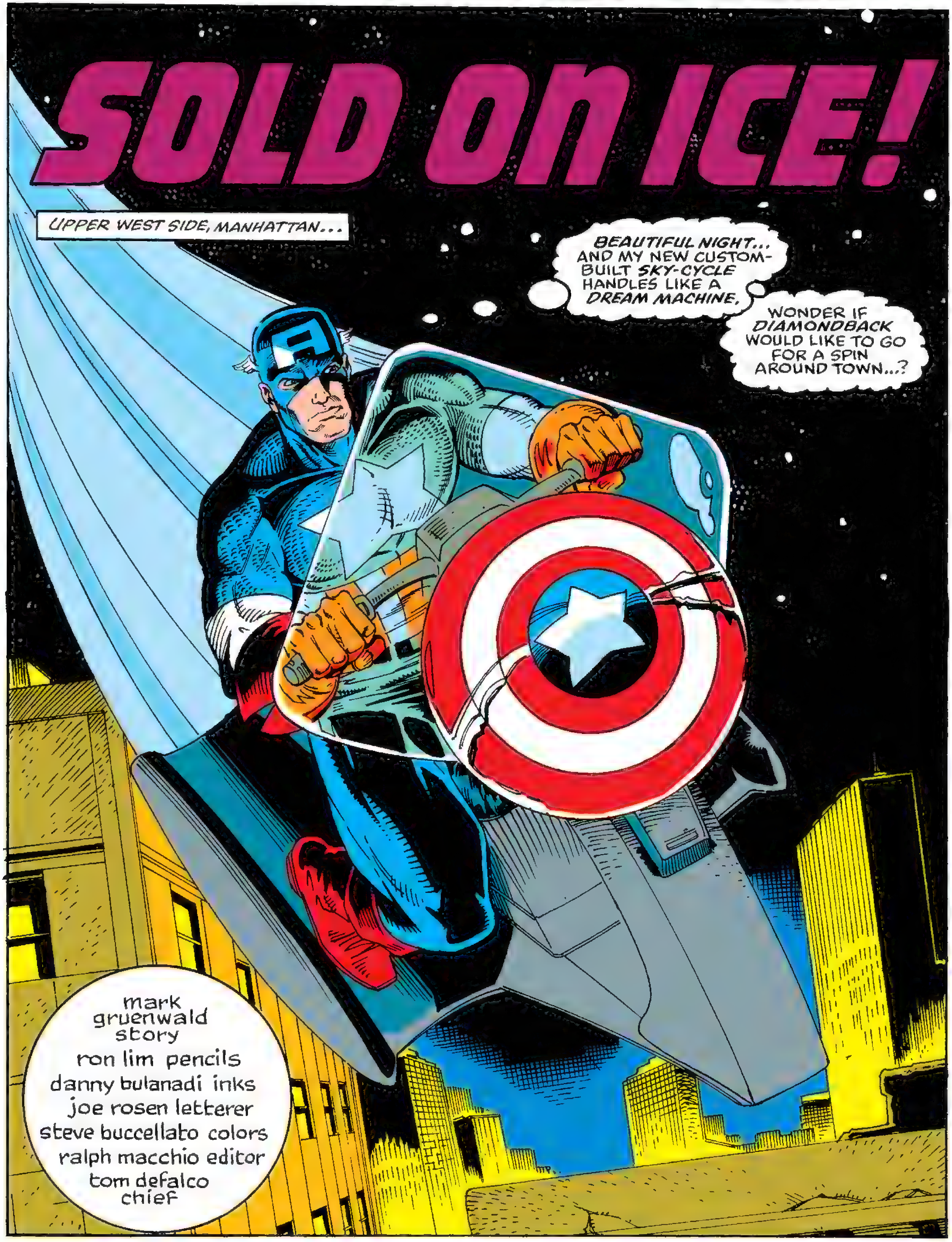
SOLD ON ICE!


UPPER WEST SIDE, MANHATTAN...
BEAUTIFUL NIGHT... AND MY NEW CUSTOM-BUILT SKY-CYCLE HANDLES LIKE A DREAM MACHINE.
WONDER IF DIAMONDBACK WOULD LIKE TO GO FOR A SPIN AROUND TOWN...?
mark gruenwald story
ron lim pencils
danny bulanadi inks
joe rosen letterer
steve buccellato colors
ralph macchio editor
tom defalco chief

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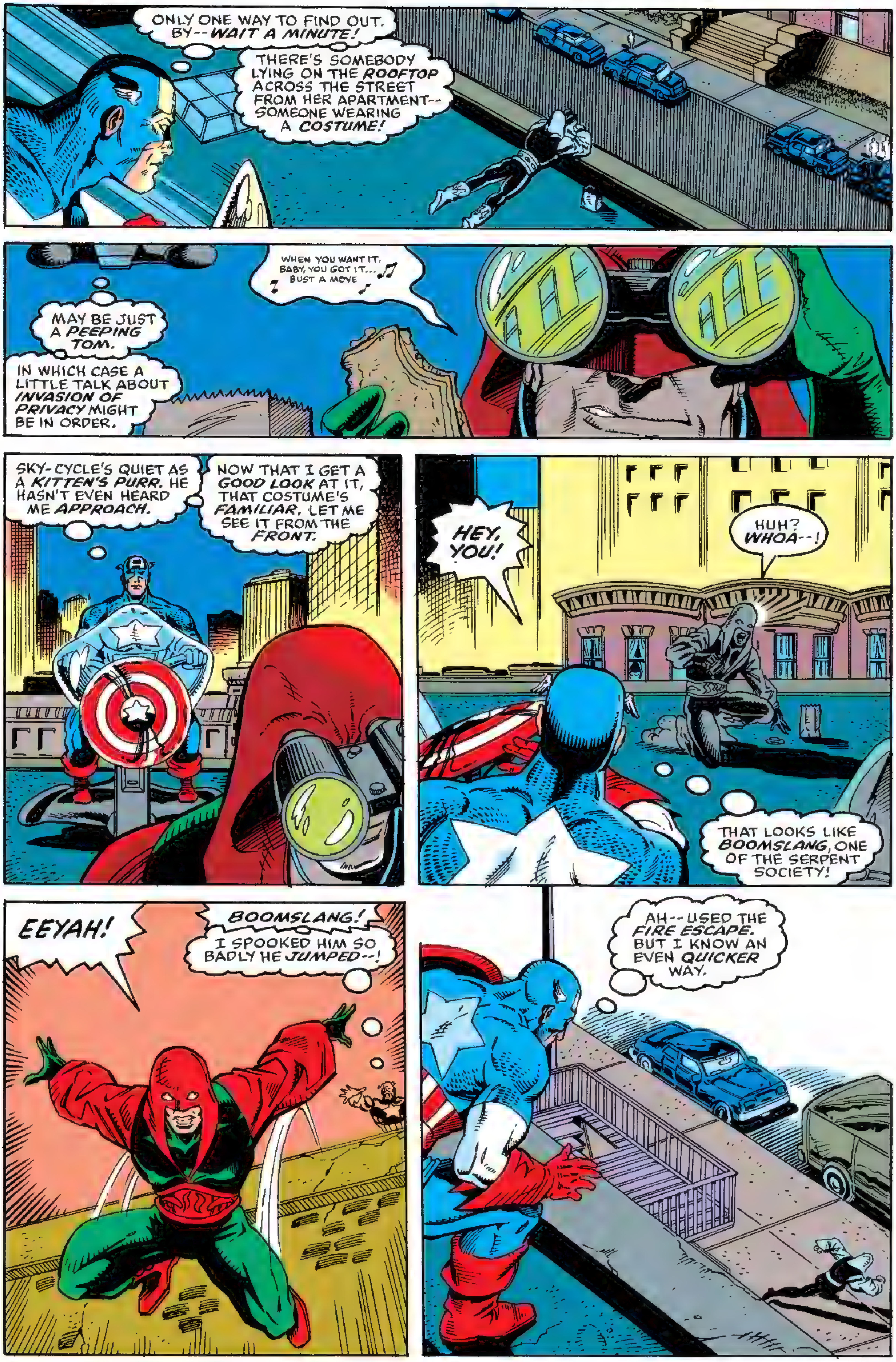
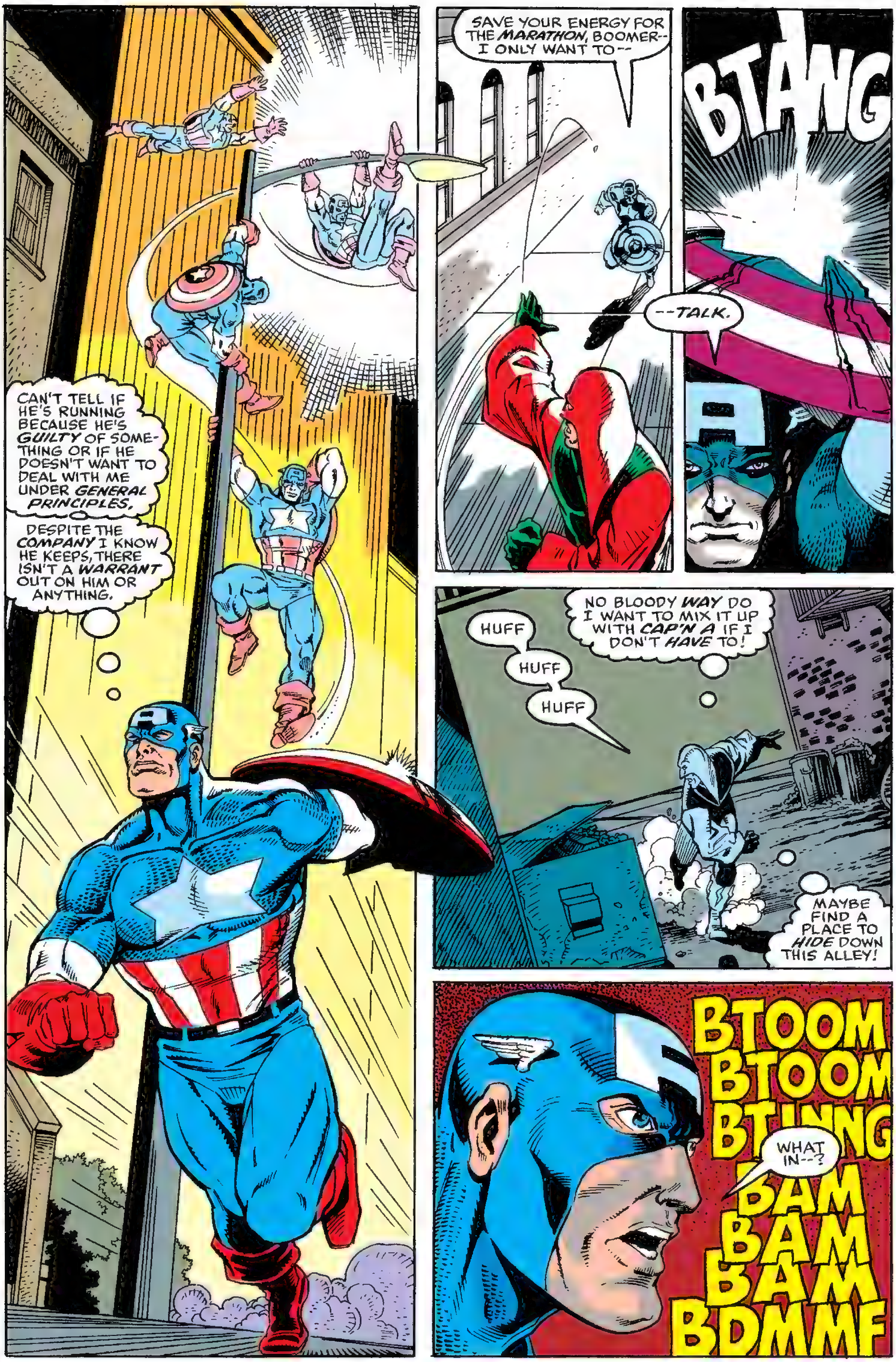
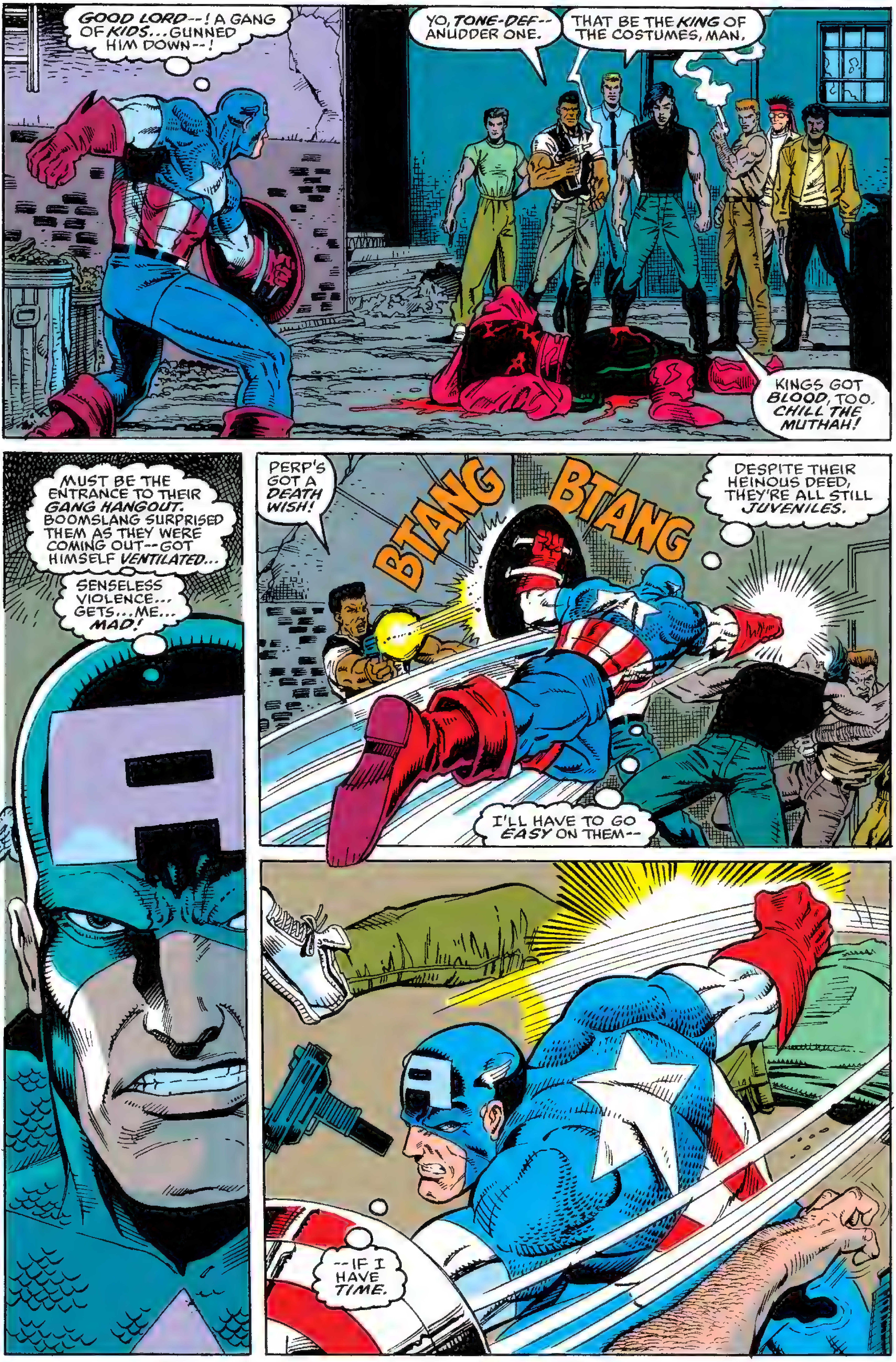
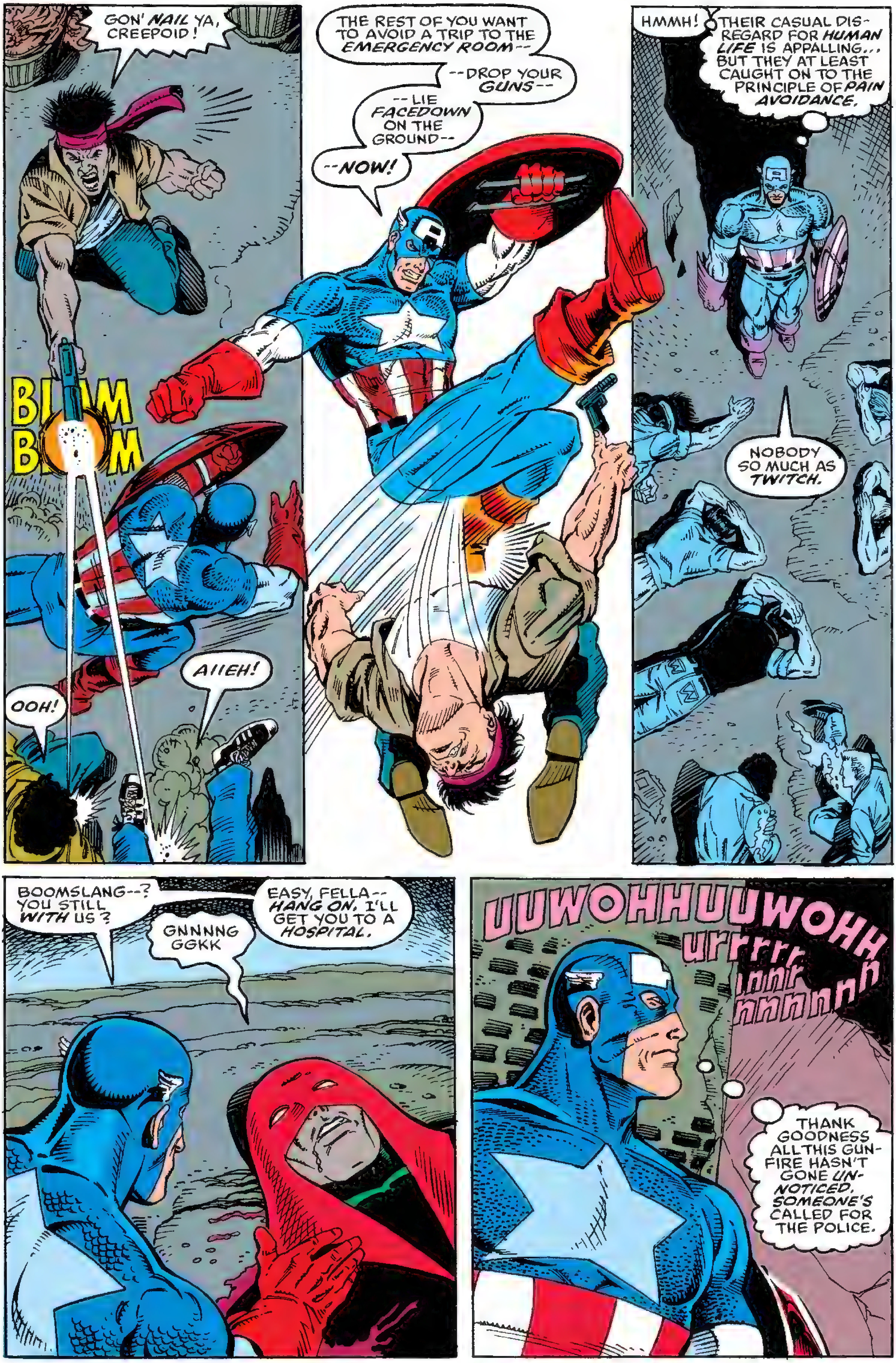
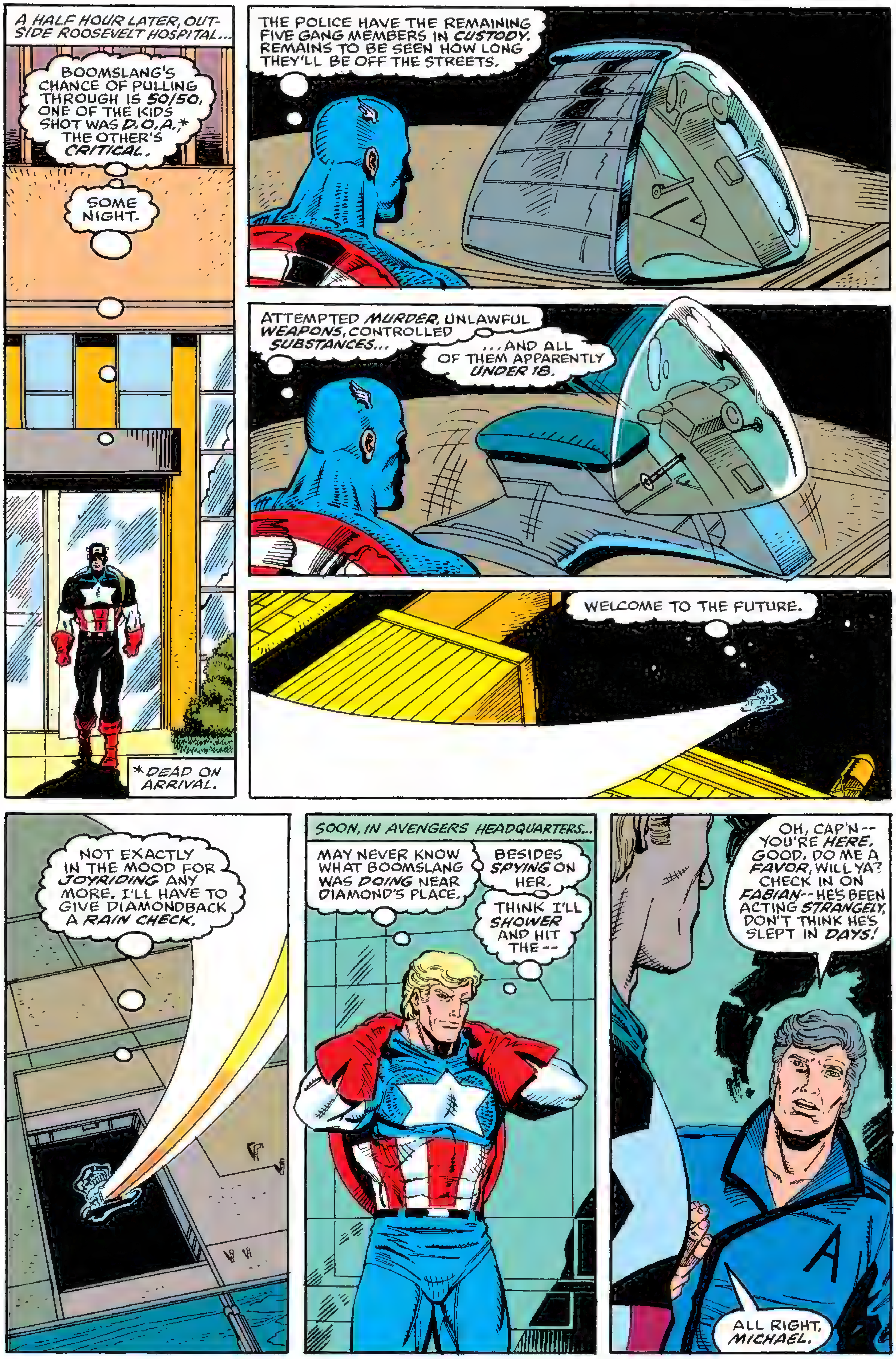
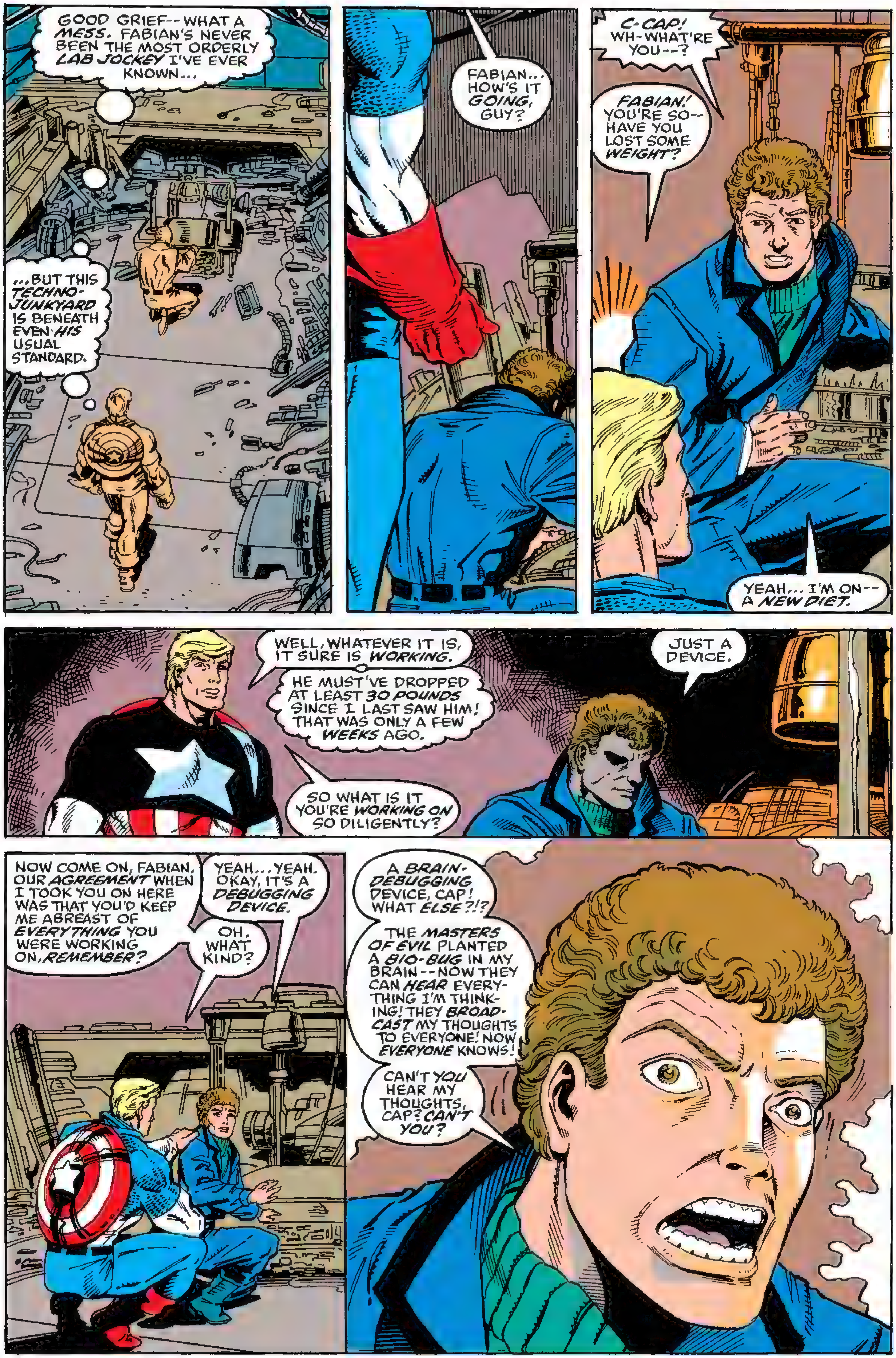

ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT. BY--WAIT A MINUTE!
THERE'S SOMEBODY LYING ON THE ROOFTOP ACROSS THE STREET FROM HER APARTMENT--SOMEONE WEARING A COSTUME!
MAY BE JUST A PEEPING TOM.
IN WHICH CASE A LITTLE TALK ABOUT INVASION OF PRIVACY MIGHT BE IN ORDER.
WHEN YOU WANT IT, BABY, YOU GOT IT... BUST A MOVE
SKY-CYCLE'S QUIET AS A KITTEN'S PURR. HE HASN'T EVEN HEARD ME APPROACH.
NOW THAT I GET A GOOD LOOK AT IT, THAT COSTUME'S FAMILIAR. LET ME SEE IT FROM THE FRONT.
HEY, YOU!
HUH? WHOA--!
THAT LOOKS LIKE BOOMSLANG, ONE OF THE SERPENT SOCIETY!
EEYAH!
BOOMSLANG! I SPOOKED HIM SO BADLY HE JUMPED--!
AH--USED THE FIRE ESCAPE. BUT I KNOW AN EVEN QUICKER WAY.

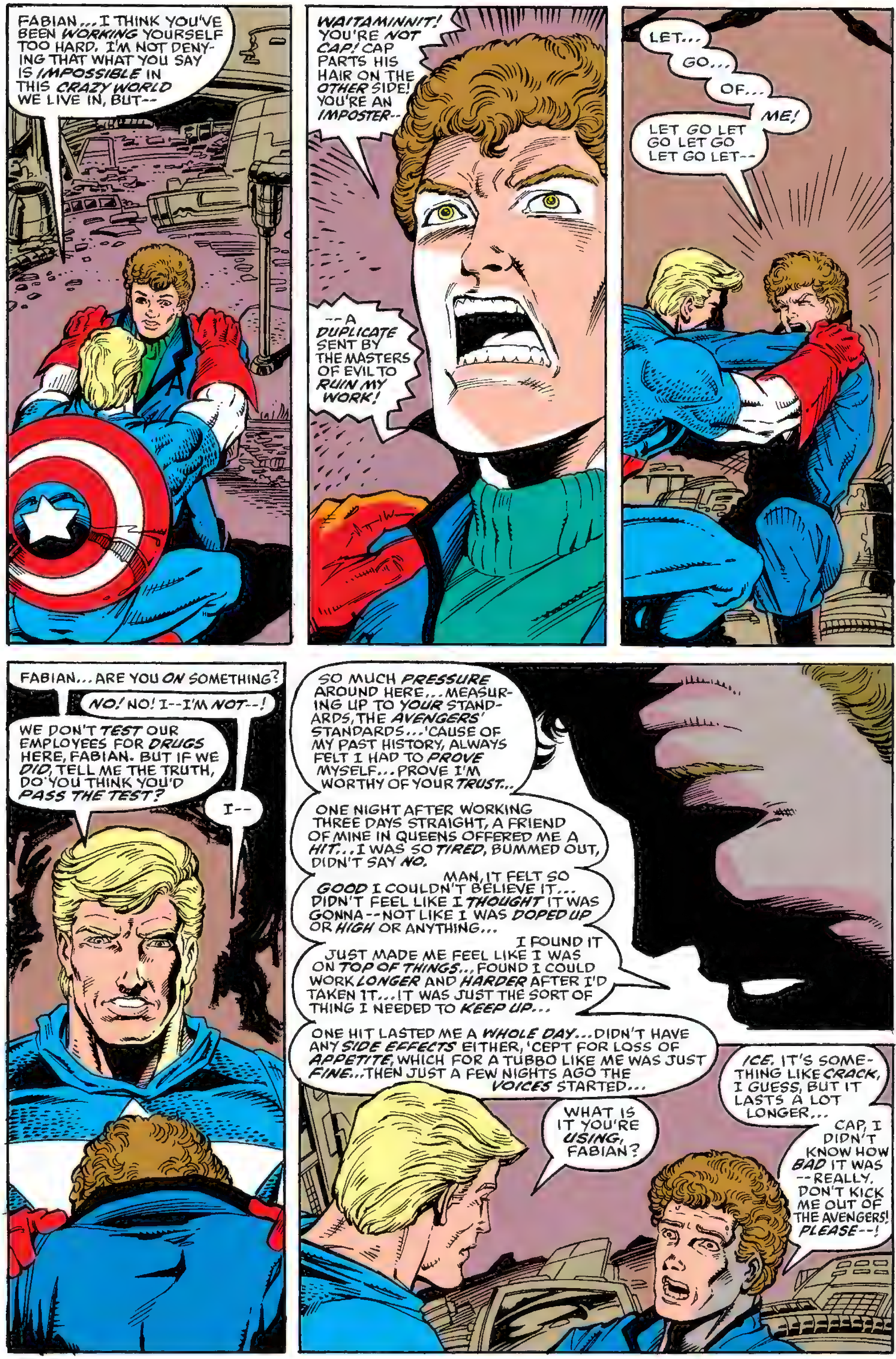

CAN'T TELL IF HE'S RUNNING BECAUSE HE'S *GUILTY* OF SOMETHING OR IF HE DOESN'T WANT TO DEAL WITH ME UNDER *GENERAL PRINCIPLES.*
DESPITE THE *COMPANY* I KNOW HE KEEPS, THERE ISN'T A *WARRANT* OUT ON HIM OR ANYTHING.
SAVE YOUR ENERGY FOR THE *MARATHON*, BOOMER-- I ONLY WANT TO--
BTANG
--*TALK.*
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
NO BLOODY *WAY* DO I WANT TO MIX IT UP WITH *CAP'N A* IF I DON'T *HAVE* TO!
MAYBE FIND A PLACE TO *HIDE* DOWN THIS ALLEY!
BTOOM
BTOOM
BTHNG
WHAT IN--?
BAM
BAM
BAM
BDMMF

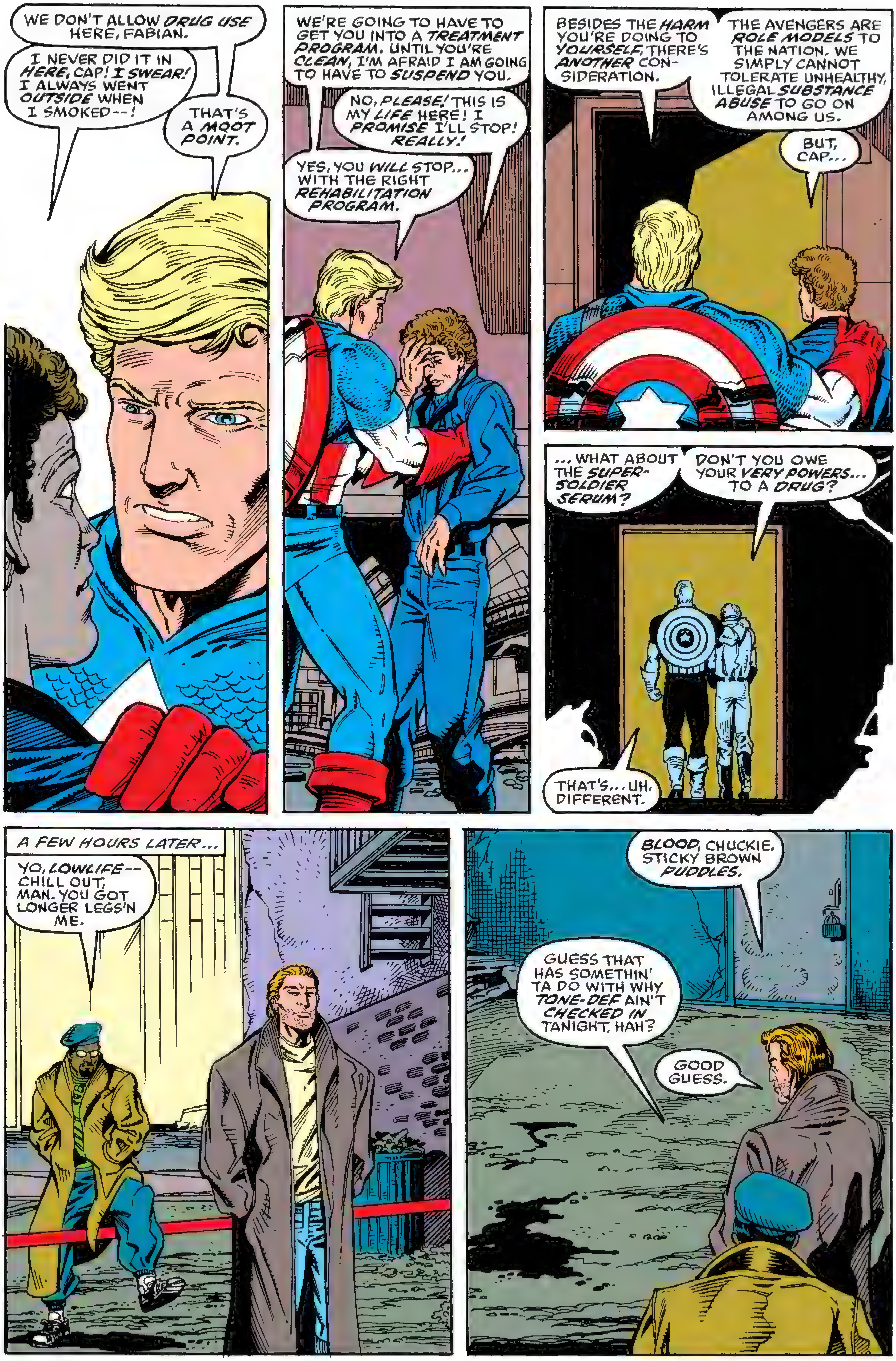

GOOD LORD--! A GANG OF KIDS... GUNNED HIM DOWN--!
YO, TONE-DEF-- ANUDDER ONE.
THAT BE THE KING OF THE COSTUMES, MAN.
KINGS GOT BLOOD, TOO. CHILL THE MUTHAH!
MUST BE THE ENTRANCE TO THEIR GANG HANGOUT. BOOMSLANG SURPRISED THEM AS THEY WERE COMING OUT--GOT HIMSELF VENTILATED...
SENSELESS VIOLENCE... GETS... ME... MAD!
PERP'S GOT A DEATH WISH!
BTANG
BTANG
DESPITE THEIR HEINOUS DEED, THEY'RE ALL STILL JUVENILES.
I'LL HAVE TO GO EASY ON THEM--
--IF I HAVE TIME.

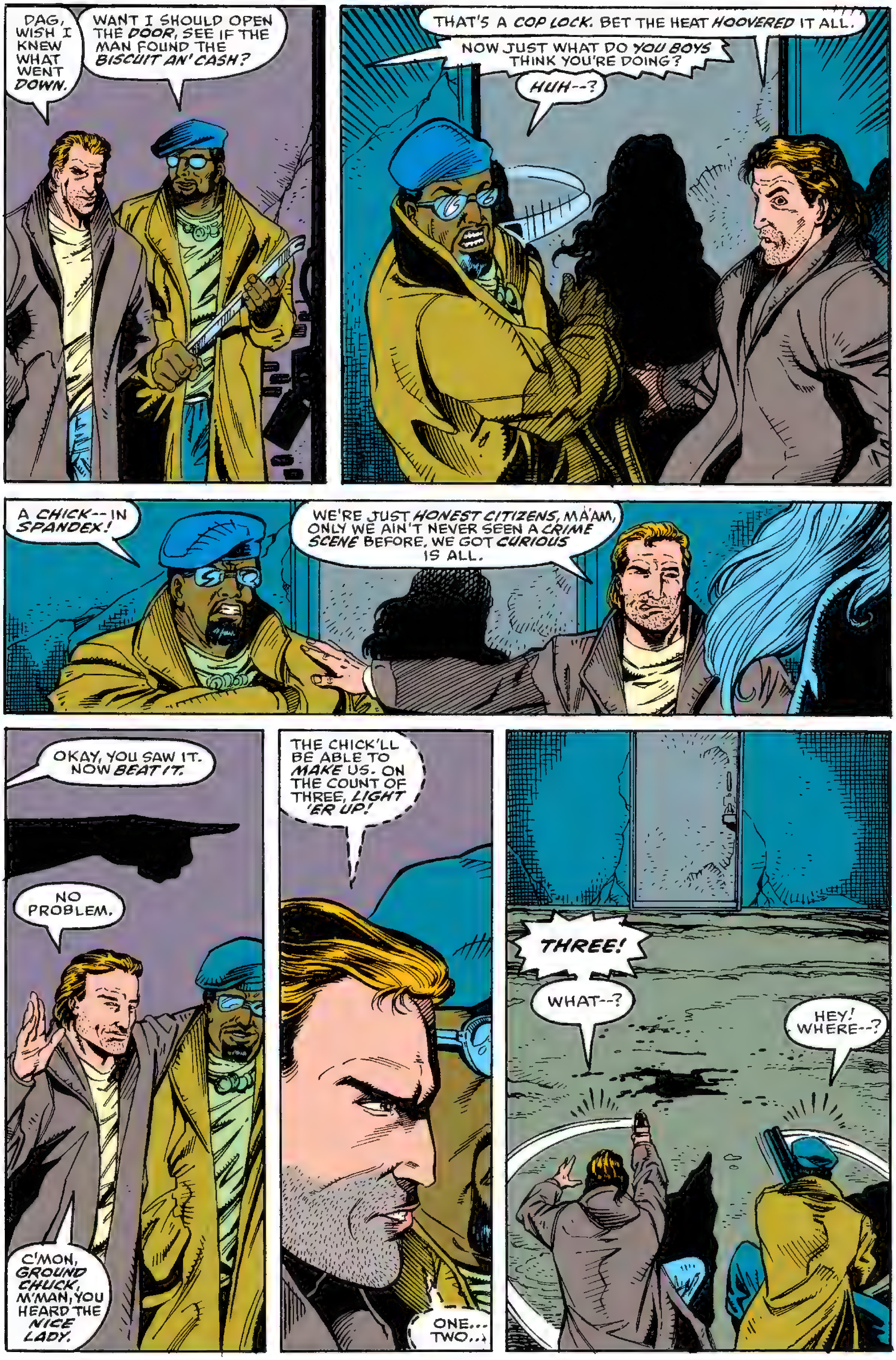

GON' *NAIL* YA, CREEPOID!
BLAM BLAM
OOH!
AIIEH!
THE REST OF YOU WANT TO AVOID A TRIP TO THE *EMERGENCY ROOM*--
--DROP YOUR *GUNS*--
--LIE *FACEDOWN* ON THE GROUND--
--*NOW!*
HMMH!
THEIR CASUAL DISREGARD FOR *HUMAN LIFE* IS APPALLING... BUT THEY AT LEAST CAUGHT ON TO THE PRINCIPLE OF *PAIN AVOIDANCE.*
NOBODY SO MUCH AS *TWITCH.*
BOOMSLANG--? YOU STILL *WITH* US?
GNNNNG GGKK
EASY, FELLA-- *HANG ON.* I'LL GET YOU TO A *HOSPITAL.*
UUWOHHUUWOHH urrrrnnnnnnnnnnn
THANK GOODNESS ALL THIS GUNFIRE HASN'T GONE *UNNOTICED. SOMEONE'S* CALLED FOR THE POLICE.

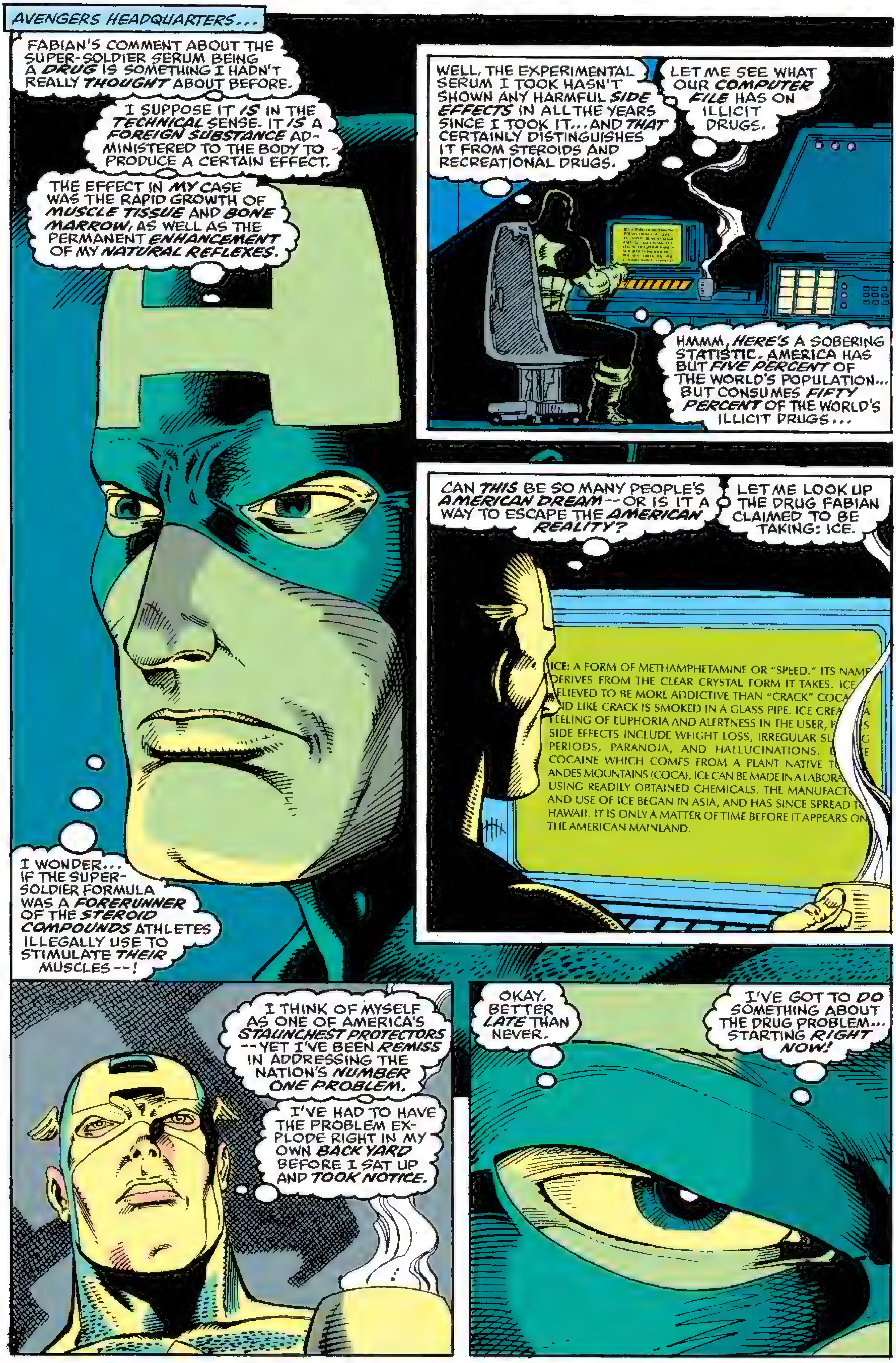

A HALF HOUR LATER, OUTSIDE ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL...
BOOMSLANG'S CHANCE OF PULLING THROUGH IS 50/50. ONE OF THE KIDS SHOT WAS D.O.A.,* THE OTHER'S CRITICAL.
SOME NIGHT.
*DEAD ON ARRIVAL.
THE POLICE HAVE THE REMAINING FIVE GANG MEMBERS IN CUSTODY. REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW LONG THEY'LL BE OFF THE STREETS.
ATTEMPTED MURDER, UNLAWFUL WEAPONS, CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES...
...AND ALL OF THEM APPARENTLY UNDER 18.
WELCOME TO THE FUTURE.
NOT EXACTLY IN THE MOOD FOR JOYRIDING ANY MORE. I'LL HAVE TO GIVE DIAMONDBACK A RAIN CHECK.
SOON, IN AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS...
MAY NEVER KNOW WHAT BOOMSLANG WAS DOING NEAR DIAMOND'S PLACE.
BESIDES SPYING ON HER.
THINK I'LL SHOWER AND HIT THE--
OH, CAP'N-- YOU'RE HERE. GOOD. DO ME A FAVOR, WILL YA? CHECK IN ON FABIAN-- HE'S BEEN ACTING STRANGELY. DON'T THINK HE'S SLEPT IN DAYS!
ALL RIGHT, MICHAEL.

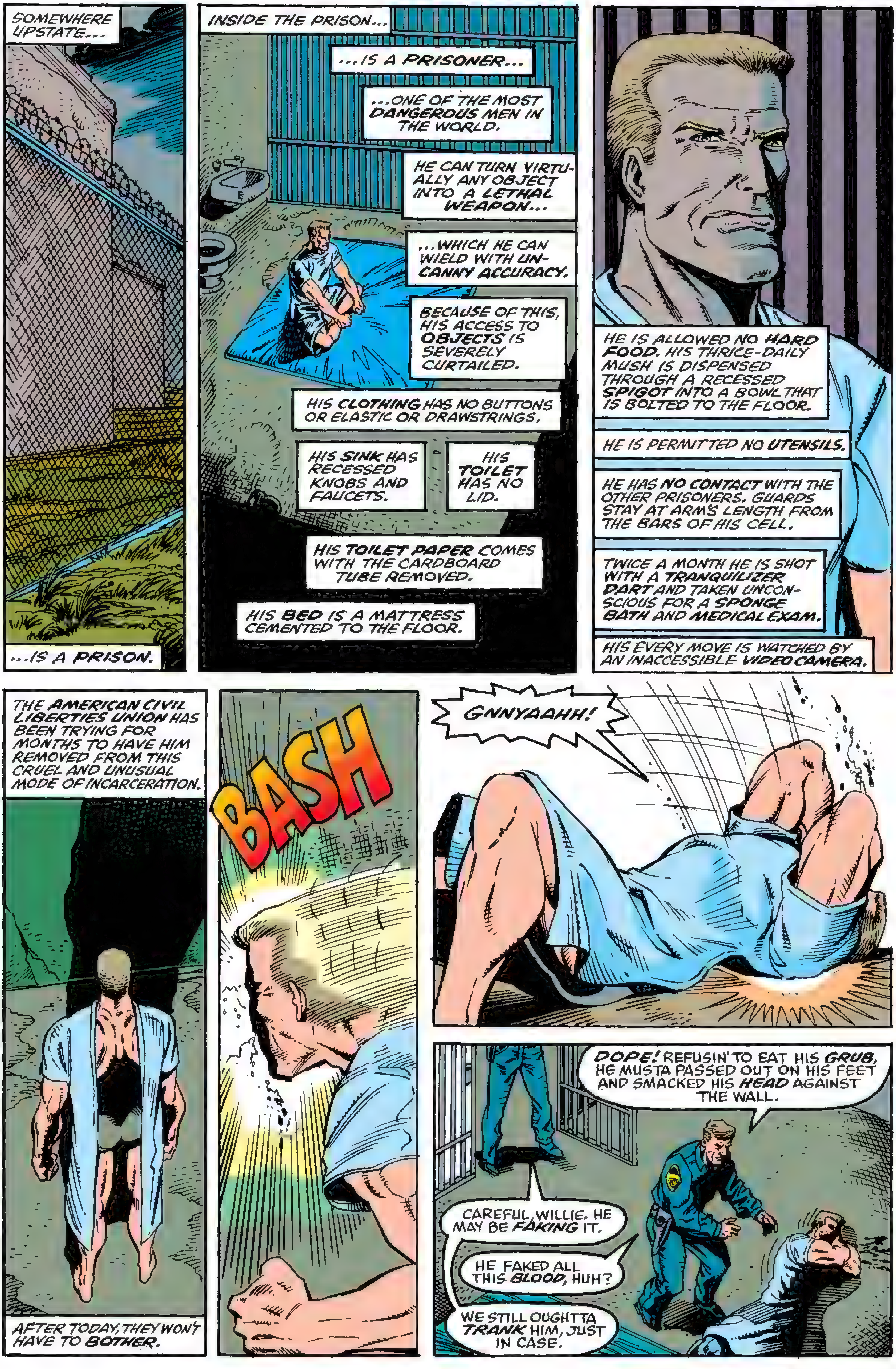

GOOD GRIEF--WHAT A MESS. FABIAN'S NEVER BEEN THE MOST ORDERLY LAB JOCKEY I'VE EVER KNOWN...
...BUT THIS TECHNO-JUNKYARD IS BENEATH EVEN HIS USUAL STANDARD.
FABIAN... HOW'S IT GOING, GUY?
C-CAP! WH-WHAT'RE YOU--?
FABIAN! YOU'RE SO-- HAVE YOU LOST SOME WEIGHT?
YEAH... I'M ON-- A NEW DIET.
WELL, WHATEVER IT IS, IT SURE IS WORKING.
HE MUST'VE DROPPED AT LEAST 30 POUNDS SINCE I LAST SAW HIM! THAT WAS ONLY A FEW WEEKS AGO.
SO WHAT IS IT YOU'RE WORKING ON SO DILIGENTLY?
JUST A DEVICE.
NOW COME ON, FABIAN. OUR AGREEMENT WHEN I TOOK YOU ON HERE WAS THAT YOU'D KEEP ME ABREAST OF EVERYTHING YOU WERE WORKING ON, REMEMBER?
YEAH... YEAH. OKAY, IT'S A DEBUGGING DEVICE.
OH. WHAT KIND?
A BRAIN-DEBUGGING DEVICE, CAP! WHAT ELSE?!?
THE MASTERS OF EVIL PLANTED A BIO-BUG IN MY BRAIN--NOW THEY CAN HEAR EVERYTHING I'M THINKING! THEY BROADCAST MY THOUGHTS TO EVERYONE! NOW EVERYONE KNOWS!
CAN'T YOU HEAR MY THOUGHTS, CAP? CAN'T YOU?

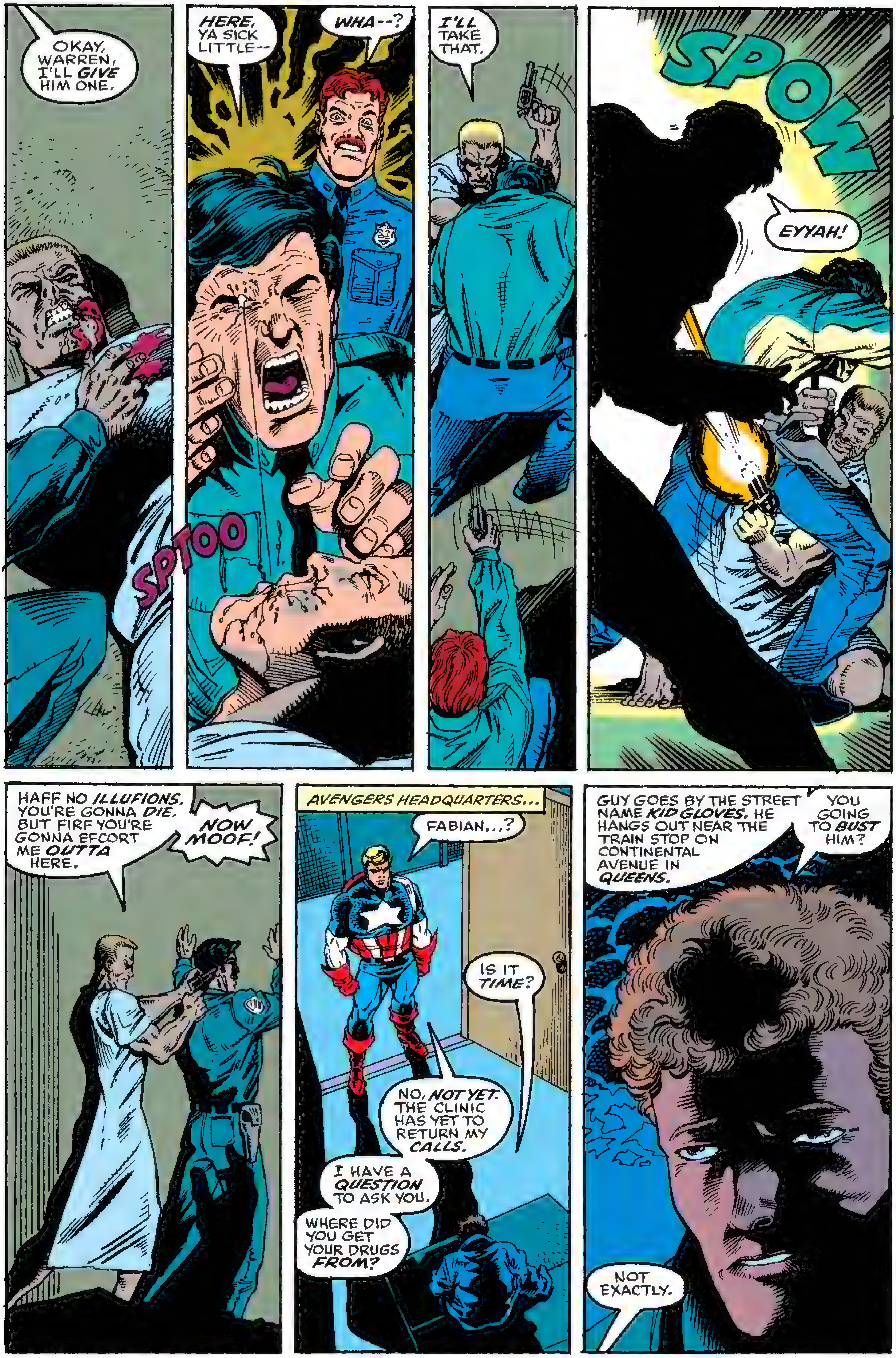

FABIAN... I THINK YOU'VE BEEN *WORKING* YOURSELF TOO HARD. I'M NOT DENYING THAT WHAT YOU SAY IS *IMPOSSIBLE* IN THIS *CRAZY WORLD* WE LIVE IN, BUT--
WAITAMINNIT! YOU'RE *NOT CAP!* CAP PARTS HIS HAIR ON THE *OTHER* SIDE! YOU'RE AN *IMPOSTER*--
--A *DUPLICATE* SENT BY THE MASTERS OF EVIL TO *RUIN MY WORK!*
LET...
GO...
OF...
ME!
LET GO LET GO LET GO LET GO LET--
FABIAN... ARE YOU *ON* SOMETHING?
NO! NO! I--I'M *NOT*--!
WE DON'T *TEST* OUR EMPLOYEES FOR *DRUGS* HERE, FABIAN. BUT IF WE *DID*, TELL ME THE TRUTH, DO YOU THINK YOU'D *PASS THE TEST?*
I--
SO MUCH *PRESSURE* AROUND HERE... MEASURING UP TO *YOUR* STANDARDS, THE *AVENGERS'* STANDARDS... 'CAUSE OF MY PAST HISTORY, ALWAYS FELT I HAD TO *PROVE* MYSELF... PROVE I'M WORTHY OF YOUR *TRUST*...
ONE NIGHT AFTER WORKING THREE DAYS STRAIGHT, A FRIEND OF MINE IN QUEENS OFFERED ME A *HIT*... I WAS SO *TIRED*, BUMMED OUT, DIDN'T SAY *NO*.
MAN, IT FELT SO *GOOD* I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT... DIDN'T FEEL LIKE I *THOUGHT* IT WAS GONNA--NOT LIKE I WAS *DOPED UP* OR *HIGH* OR ANYTHING...
I FOUND IT JUST MADE ME FEEL LIKE I WAS ON *TOP OF THINGS*... FOUND I COULD WORK *LONGER* AND *HARDER* AFTER I'D TAKEN IT... IT WAS JUST THE SORT OF THING I NEEDED TO *KEEP UP*...
ONE HIT LASTED ME A *WHOLE DAY*... DIDN'T HAVE ANY *SIDE EFFECTS* EITHER, 'CEPT FOR LOSS OF *APPETITE*, WHICH FOR A TUBBO LIKE ME WAS JUST *FINE*... THEN JUST A FEW NIGHTS AGO THE *VOICES* STARTED...
WHAT IS IT YOU'RE *USING*, FABIAN?
ICE. IT'S SOMETHING LIKE *CRACK*, I GUESS, BUT IT LASTS A LOT LONGER...
CAP, I DIDN'T KNOW HOW *BAD* IT WAS --REALLY. DON'T KICK ME OUT OF THE AVENGERS! *PLEASE*--!

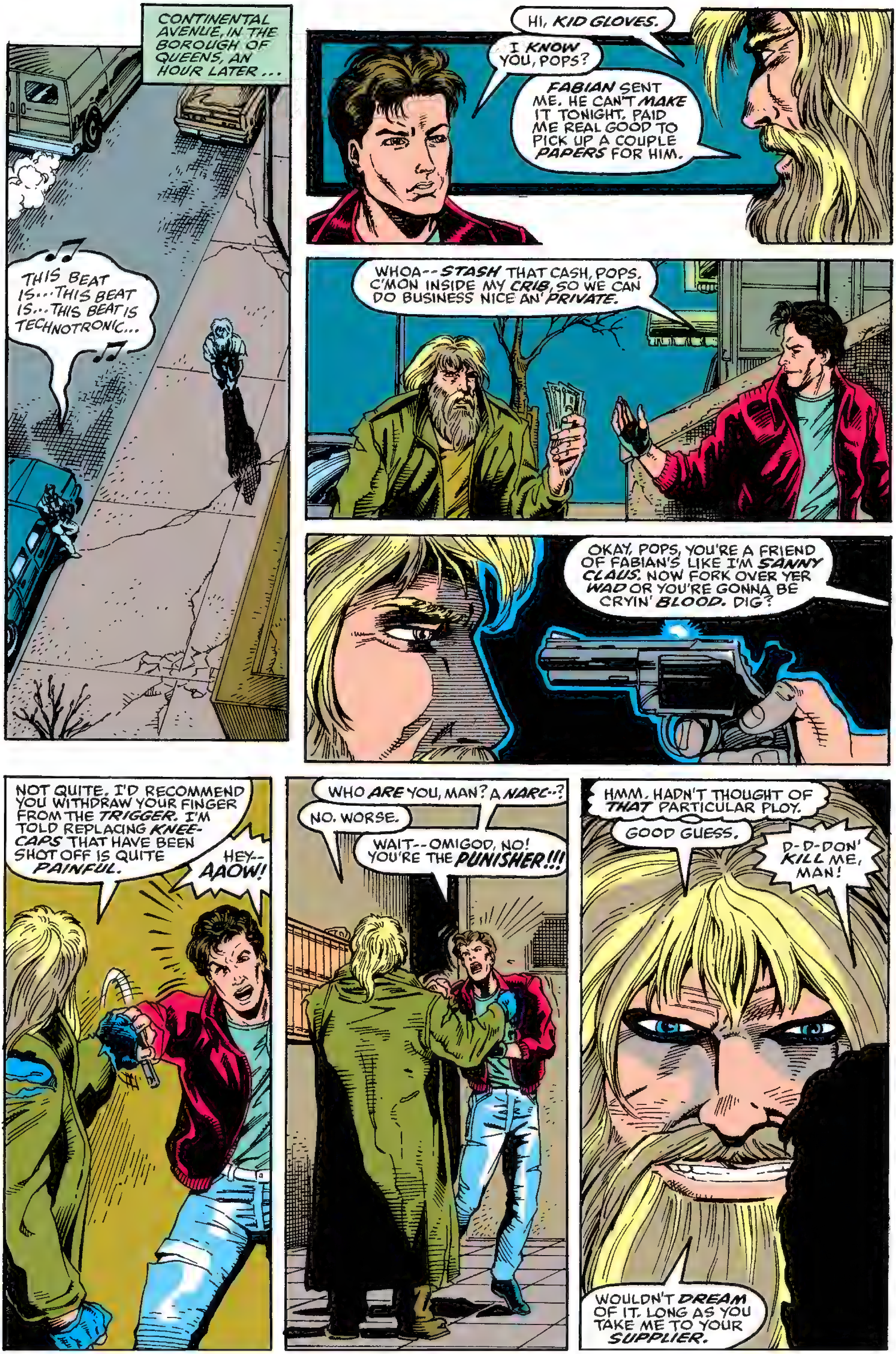

WE DON'T ALLOW DRUG USE HERE, FABIAN.
I NEVER DID IT IN HERE, CAP! I SWEAR! I ALWAYS WENT OUTSIDE WHEN I SMOKED--!
THAT'S A MOOT POINT.
WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO GET YOU INTO A TREATMENT PROGRAM. UNTIL YOU'RE CLEAN, I'M AFRAID I AM GOING TO HAVE TO SUSPEND YOU.
NO, PLEASE! THIS IS MY LIFE HERE! I PROMISE I'LL STOP! REALLY!
YES, YOU WILL STOP... WITH THE RIGHT REHABILITATION PROGRAM.
BESIDES THE HARM YOU'RE DOING TO YOURSELF, THERE'S ANOTHER CONSIDERATION.
THE AVENGERS ARE ROLE MODELS TO THE NATION. WE SIMPLY CANNOT TOLERATE UNHEALTHY, ILLEGAL SUBSTANCE ABUSE TO GO ON AMONG US.
BUT, CAP...
...WHAT ABOUT THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM?
DON'T YOU OWE YOUR VERY POWERS... TO A DRUG?
THAT'S... UH, DIFFERENT.
A FEW HOURS LATER...
YO, LOWLIFE -- CHILL OUT, MAN. YOU GOT LONGER LEGS'N ME.
BLOOD, CHUCKIE. STICKY BROWN PUDDLES.
GUESS THAT HAS SOMETHIN' TA DO WITH WHY TONE-DEF AIN'T CHECKED IN TANIGHT, HAH?
GOOD GUESS.

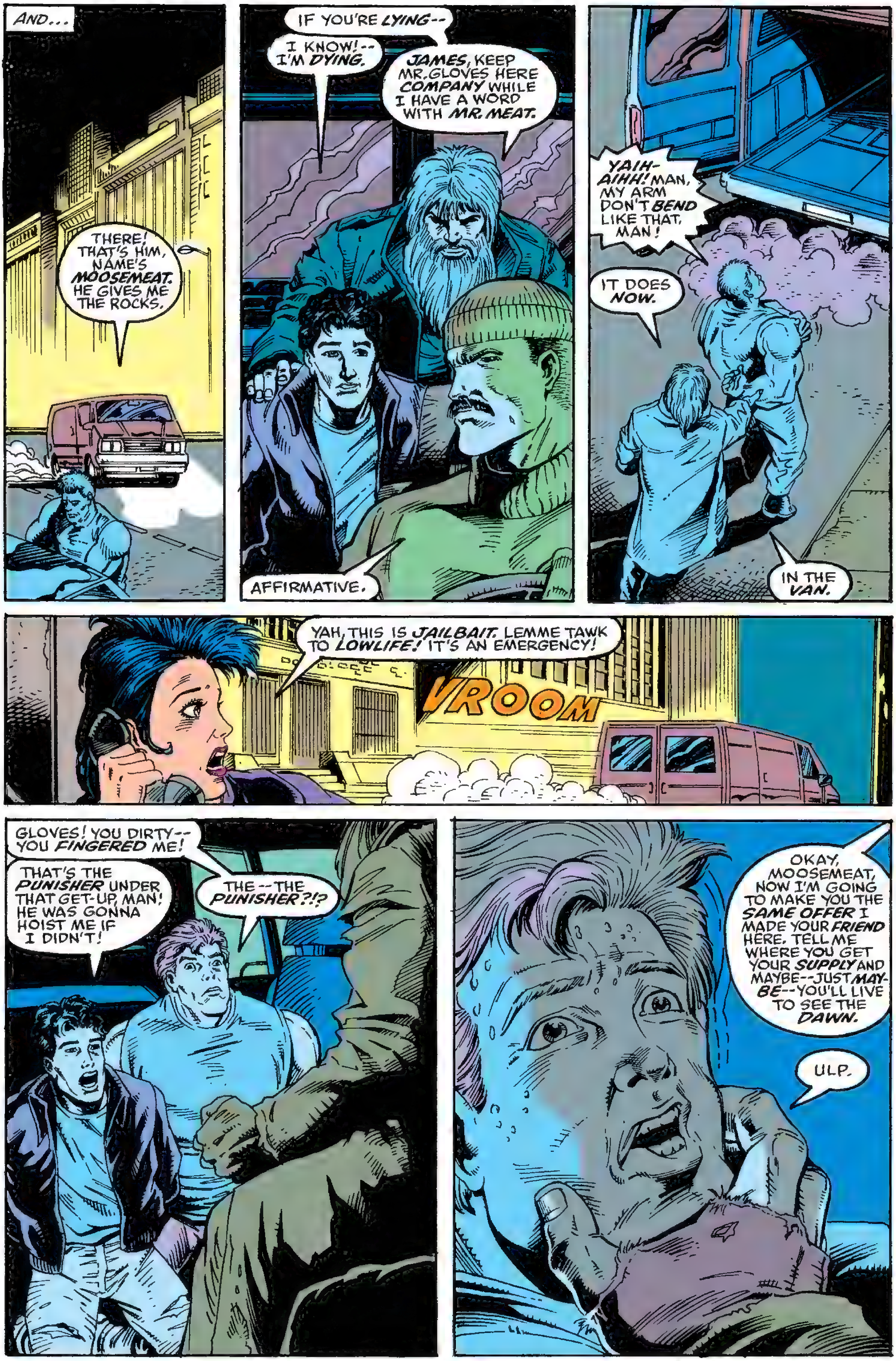

DAG, WISH I KNEW WHAT WENT DOWN.
WANT I SHOULD OPEN THE DOOR, SEE IF THE MAN FOUND THE BISCUIT AN' CASH?
THAT'S A COP LOCK. BET THE HEAT HOOVERED IT ALL.
NOW JUST WHAT DO YOU BOYS THINK YOU'RE DOING?
HUH--?
A CHICK-- IN SPANDEX!
WE'RE JUST HONEST CITIZENS, MA'AM, ONLY WE AIN'T NEVER SEEN A CRIME SCENE BEFORE, WE GOT CURIOUS IS ALL.
OKAY, YOU SAW IT. NOW BEAT IT.
NO PROBLEM.
C'MON, GROUND CHUCK, M'MAN, YOU HEARD THE NICE LADY.
THE CHICK'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE US. ON THE COUNT OF THREE, LIGHT 'ER UP!
ONE... TWO...
THREE!
WHAT--?
HEY! WHERE--?

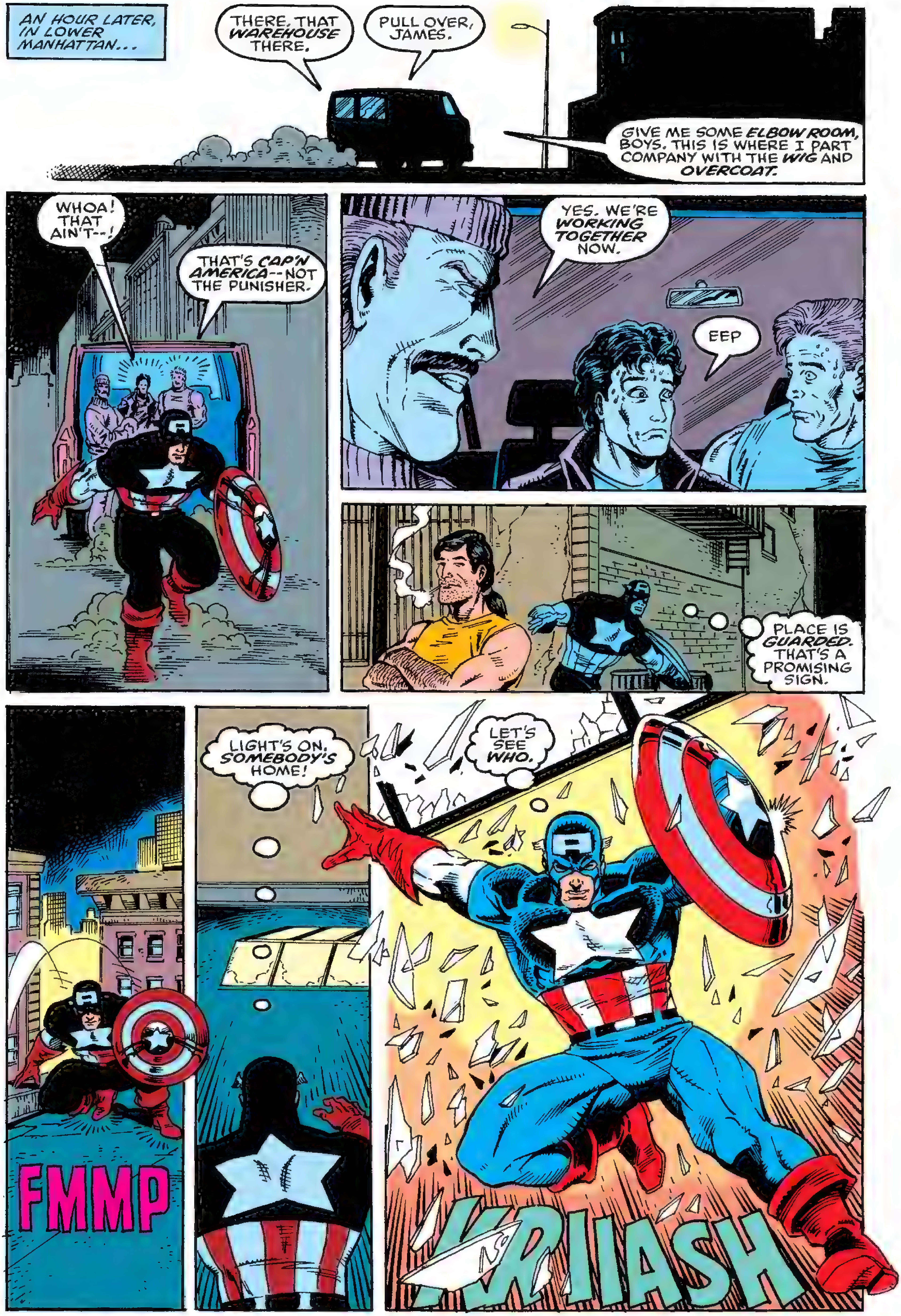

AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS...
FABIAN'S COMMENT ABOUT THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM BEING A DRUG IS SOMETHING I HADN'T REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT BEFORE.
I SUPPOSE IT IS IN THE TECHNICAL SENSE. IT IS A FOREIGN SUBSTANCE ADMINISTERED TO THE BODY TO PRODUCE A CERTAIN EFFECT.
THE EFFECT IN MY CASE WAS THE RAPID GROWTH OF MUSCLE TISSUE AND BONE MARROW, AS WELL AS THE PERMANENT ENHANCEMENT OF MY NATURAL REFLEXES.
I WONDER... IF THE SUPER-SOLDIER FORMULA WAS A FORERUNNER OF THE STEROID COMPOUNDS ATHLETES ILLEGALLY USE TO STIMULATE THEIR MUSCLES --!
WELL, THE EXPERIMENTAL SERUM I TOOK HASN'T SHOWN ANY HARMFUL SIDE EFFECTS IN ALL THE YEARS SINCE I TOOK IT... AND THAT CERTAINLY DISTINGUISHES IT FROM STEROIDS AND RECREATIONAL DRUGS.
LET ME SEE WHAT OUR COMPUTER FILE HAS ON ILLICIT DRUGS.
HMMM, HERE'S A SOBERING STATISTIC. AMERICA HAS BUT FIVE PERCENT OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION... BUT CONSUMES FIFTY PERCENT OF THE WORLD'S ILLICIT DRUGS...
CAN THIS BE SO MANY PEOPLE'S AMERICAN DREAM--OR IS IT A WAY TO ESCAPE THE AMERICAN REALITY?
LET ME LOOK UP THE DRUG FABIAN CLAIMED TO BE TAKING: ICE.
ICE: A FORM OF METHAMPHETAMINE OR "SPEED." ITS NAM
DERIVES FROM THE CLEAR CRYSTAL FORM IT TAKES. ICE
ELIEVED TO BE MORE ADDICTIVE THAN "CRACK" COCA
ND LIKE CRACK IS SMOKED IN A GLASS PIPE. ICE CREA
FEELING OF EUPHORIA AND ALERTNESS IN THE USER.
SIDE EFFECTS INCLUDE WEIGHT LOSS, IRREGULAR SL
PERIODS, PARANOIA, AND HALLUCINATIONS.
COCAINE WHICH COMES FROM A PLANT NATIVE T
ANDES MOUNTAINS (COCA), ICE CAN BE MADE IN A LABORA
USING READILY OBTAINED CHEMICALS. THE MANUFACT
AND USE OF ICE BEGAN IN ASIA, AND HAS SINCE SPREAD T
HAWAII. IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE IT APPEARS ON
THE AMERICAN MAINLAND.
I THINK OF MYSELF AS ONE OF AMERICA'S STAUNCHEST PROTECTORS --YET I'VE BEEN REMISS IN ADDRESSING THE NATION'S NUMBER ONE PROBLEM.
I'VE HAD TO HAVE THE PROBLEM EXPLODE RIGHT IN MY OWN BACK YARD BEFORE I SAT UP AND TOOK NOTICE.
OKAY. BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.
I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE DRUG PROBLEM... STARTING RIGHT NOW!

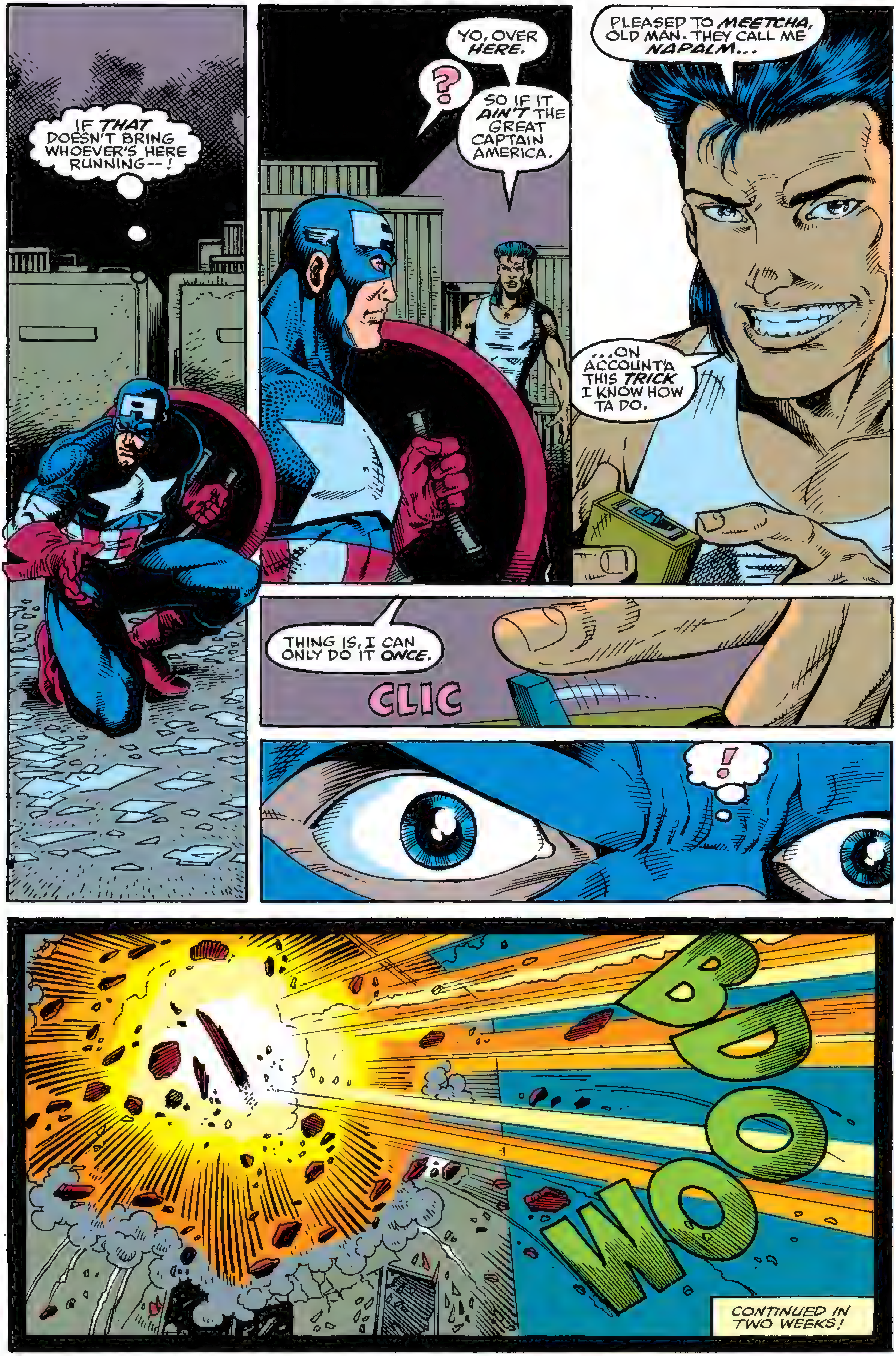

SOMEWHERE UPSTATE...
...IS A PRISON.
INSIDE THE PRISON...
...IS A PRISONER...
...ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS MEN IN THE WORLD.
HE CAN TURN VIRTUALLY ANY OBJECT INTO A LETHAL WEAPON...
...WHICH HE CAN WIELD WITH UNCANNY ACCURACY.
BECAUSE OF THIS, HIS ACCESS TO OBJECTS IS SEVERELY CURTAILED.
HIS CLOTHING HAS NO BUTTONS OR ELASTIC OR DRAWSTRINGS.
HIS SINK HAS RECESSED KNOBS AND FAUCETS.
HIS TOILET HAS NO LID.
HIS TOILET PAPER COMES WITH THE CARDBOARD TUBE REMOVED.
HIS BED IS A MATTRESS CEMENTED TO THE FLOOR.
HE IS ALLOWED NO HARD FOOD. HIS THRICE-DAILY MUSH IS DISPENSED THROUGH A RECESSED SPIGOT INTO A BOWL THAT IS BOLTED TO THE FLOOR.
HE IS PERMITTED NO UTENSILS.
HE HAS NO CONTACT WITH THE OTHER PRISONERS. GUARDS STAY AT ARM'S LENGTH FROM THE BARS OF HIS CELL.
TWICE A MONTH HE IS SHOT WITH A TRANQUILIZER DART AND TAKEN UNCONSCIOUS FOR A SPONGE BATH AND MEDICAL EXAM.
HIS EVERY MOVE IS WATCHED BY AN INACCESSIBLE VIDEO CAMERA.
THE AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION HAS BEEN TRYING FOR MONTHS TO HAVE HIM REMOVED FROM THIS CRUEL AND UNUSUAL MODE OF INCARCERATION.
AFTER TODAY, THEY WON'T HAVE TO BOTHER.
BASH
GNNYAAHH!
DOPE! REFUSIN' TO EAT HIS GRUB, HE MUSTA PASSED OUT ON HIS FEET AND SMACKED HIS HEAD AGAINST THE WALL.
CAREFUL, WILLIE. HE MAY BE FAKING IT.
HE FAKED ALL THIS BLOOD, HUH?
WE STILL OUGHTTA TRANK HIM, JUST IN CASE.

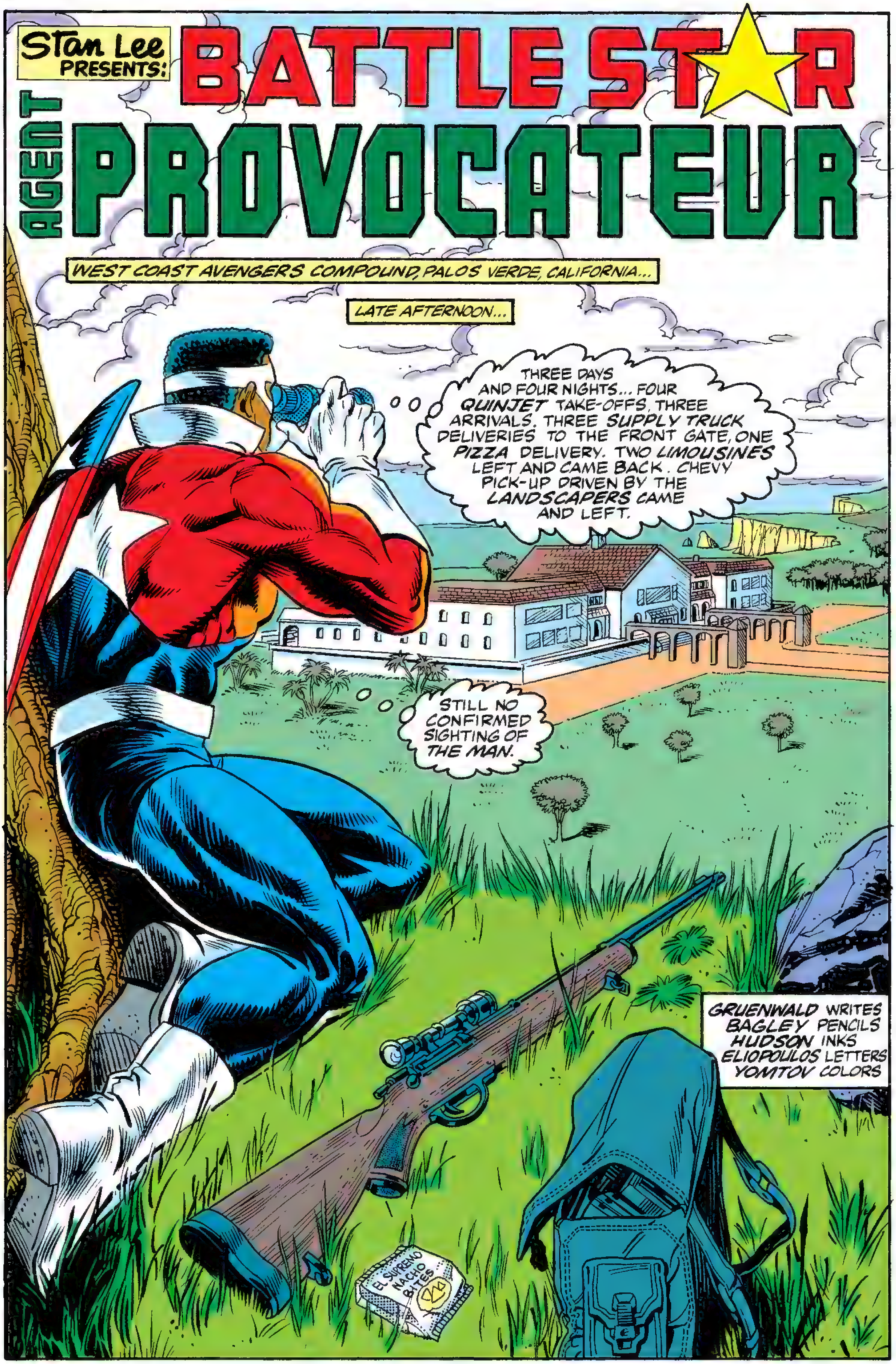

OKAY, WARREN, I'LL *GIVE* HIM ONE.
SPTOO
HERE, YA SICK LITTLE--
WHA--?
I'LL TAKE THAT.
SPOW
EYYAH!
HAFF NO *ILLUFIONS.* YOU'RE GONNA *DIE.* BUT FIRF YOU'RE GONNA EFCORT ME *OUTTA* HERE.
NOW MOOF!
AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS...
FABIAN...?
IS IT *TIME?*
NO, *NOT YET.* THE CLINIC HAS YET TO RETURN MY *CALLS.*
I HAVE A *QUESTION* TO ASK YOU.
WHERE DID YOU GET YOUR DRUGS *FROM?*
GUY GOES BY THE STREET NAME *KID GLOVES.* HE HANGS OUT NEAR THE TRAIN STOP ON CONTINENTAL AVENUE IN *QUEENS.*
YOU GOING TO *BUST* HIM?
NOT EXACTLY.

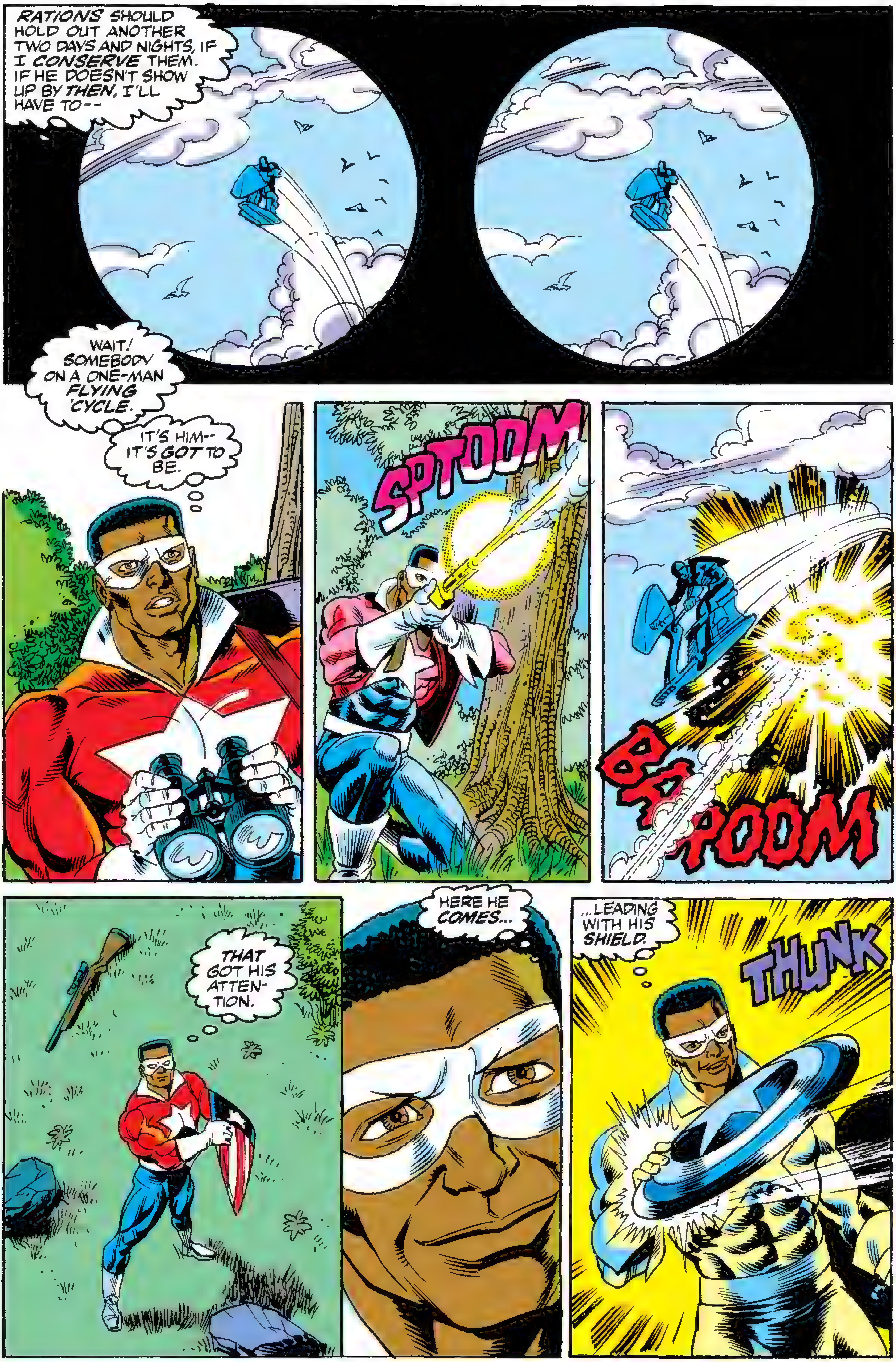

CONTINENTAL AVENUE, IN THE BOROUGH OF QUEENS, AN HOUR LATER...
THIS BEAT IS...THIS BEAT IS...THIS BEAT IS TECHNOTRONIC...
HI, KID GLOVES.
I KNOW YOU, POPS?
FABIAN SENT ME. HE CAN'T MAKE IT TONIGHT. PAID ME REAL GOOD TO PICK UP A COUPLE PAPERS FOR HIM.
WHOA--STASH THAT CASH, POPS. C'MON INSIDE MY CRIB, SO WE CAN DO BUSINESS NICE AN' PRIVATE.
OKAY, POPS, YOU'RE A FRIEND OF FABIAN'S LIKE I'M SANNY CLAUS. NOW FORK OVER YER WAD OR YOU'RE GONNA BE CRYIN' BLOOD. DIG?
NOT QUITE. I'D RECOMMEND YOU WITHDRAW YOUR FINGER FROM THE TRIGGER. I'M TOLD REPLACING KNEE-CAPS THAT HAVE BEEN SHOT OFF IS QUITE PAINFUL.
HEY-- AAOW!
WHO ARE YOU, MAN? A NARC--?
NO. WORSE.
WAIT--OMIGOD, NO! YOU'RE THE PUNISHER!!!
HMM. HADN'T THOUGHT OF THAT PARTICULAR PLOY.
GOOD GUESS.
D-D-DON' KILL ME, MAN!
WOULDN'T DREAM OF IT. LONG AS YOU TAKE ME TO YOUR SUPPLIER.

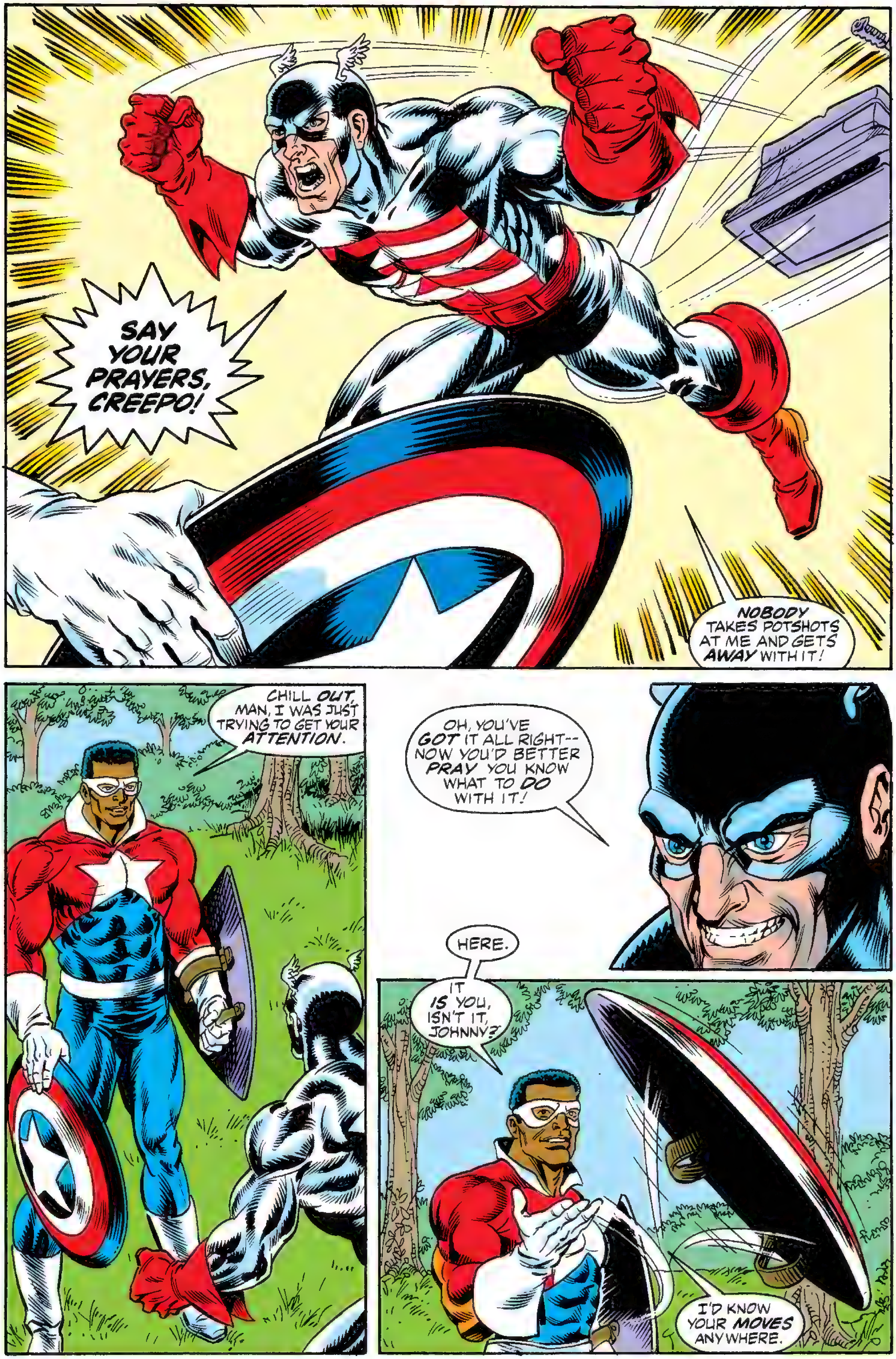

AND...
THERE! THAT'S HIM, NAME'S MOOSEMEAT. HE GIVES ME THE ROCKS.
IF YOU'RE LYING--
I KNOW!-- I'M DYING.
JAMES, KEEP MR. GLOVES HERE COMPANY WHILE I HAVE A WORD WITH MR. MEAT.
AFFIRMATIVE.
YAIH-AIHH! MAN, MY ARM DON'T BEND LIKE THAT, MAN!
IT DOES NOW.
IN THE VAN.
YAH, THIS IS JAILBAIT. LEMME TAWK TO LOWLIFE! IT'S AN EMERGENCY!
VROOM
GLOVES! YOU DIRTY-- YOU FINGERED ME!
THAT'S THE PUNISHER UNDER THAT GET-UP, MAN! HE WAS GONNA HOIST ME IF I DIDN'T!
THE--THE PUNISHER?!?
OKAY, MOOSEMEAT, NOW I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU THE SAME OFFER I MADE YOUR FRIEND HERE. TELL ME WHERE YOU GET YOUR SUPPLY AND MAYBE--JUST MAYBE--YOU'LL LIVE TO SEE THE DAWN.
ULP.

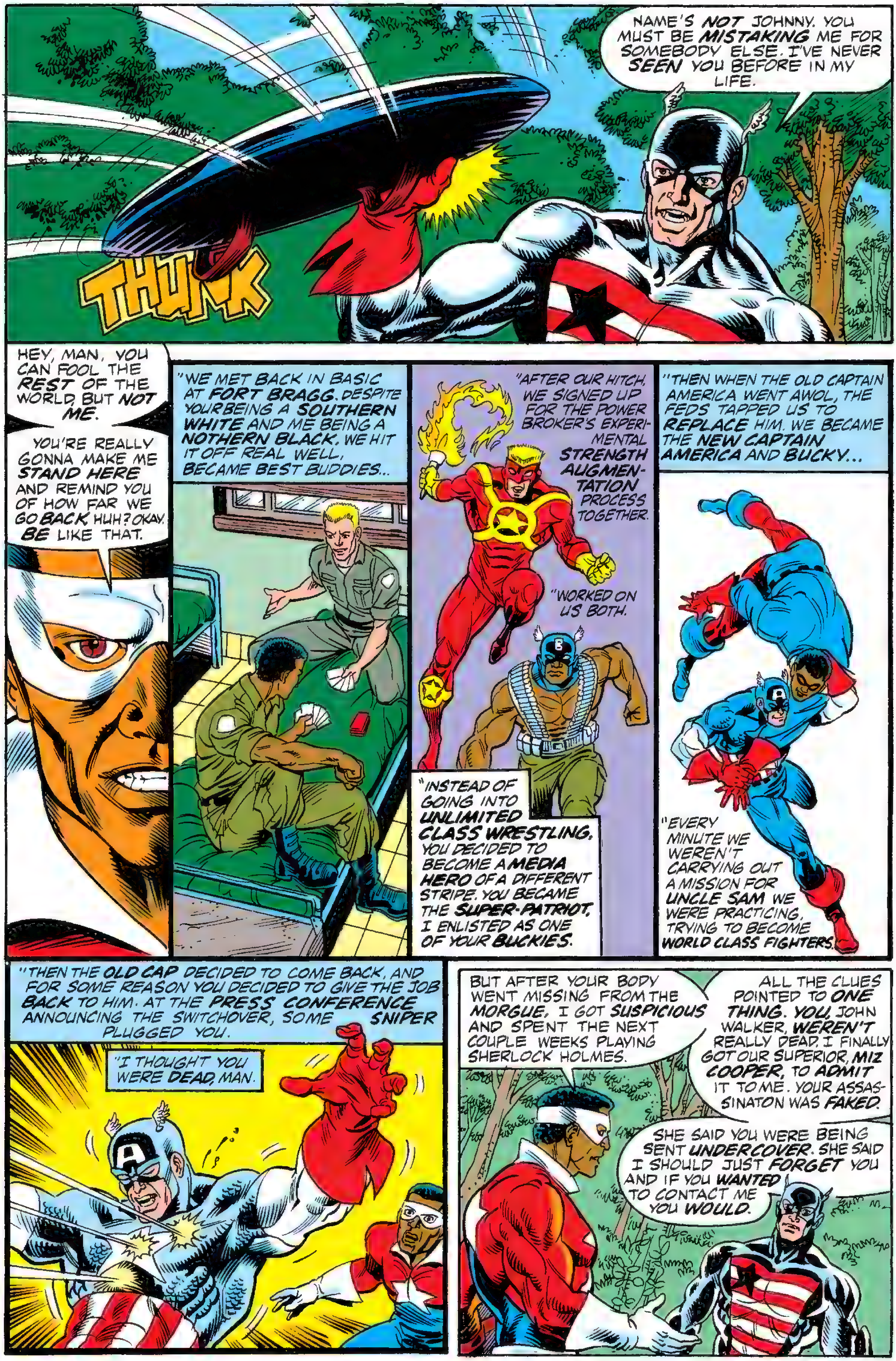

AN HOUR LATER, IN LOWER MANHATTAN...
THERE. THAT *WAREHOUSE* THERE.
PULL OVER, JAMES.
GIVE ME SOME *ELBOW ROOM*, BOYS. THIS IS WHERE I PART COMPANY WITH THE *WIG* AND *OVERCOAT*.
WHOA! THAT AIN'T--!
THAT'S *CAP'N AMERICA*--NOT THE PUNISHER.
YES. WE'RE *WORKING TOGETHER* NOW.
EEP
PLACE IS *GUARDED*. THAT'S A PROMISING SIGN.
FMMP
LIGHT'S ON. *SOMEBODY'S* HOME!
LET'S SEE *WHO*.
KRIIASH

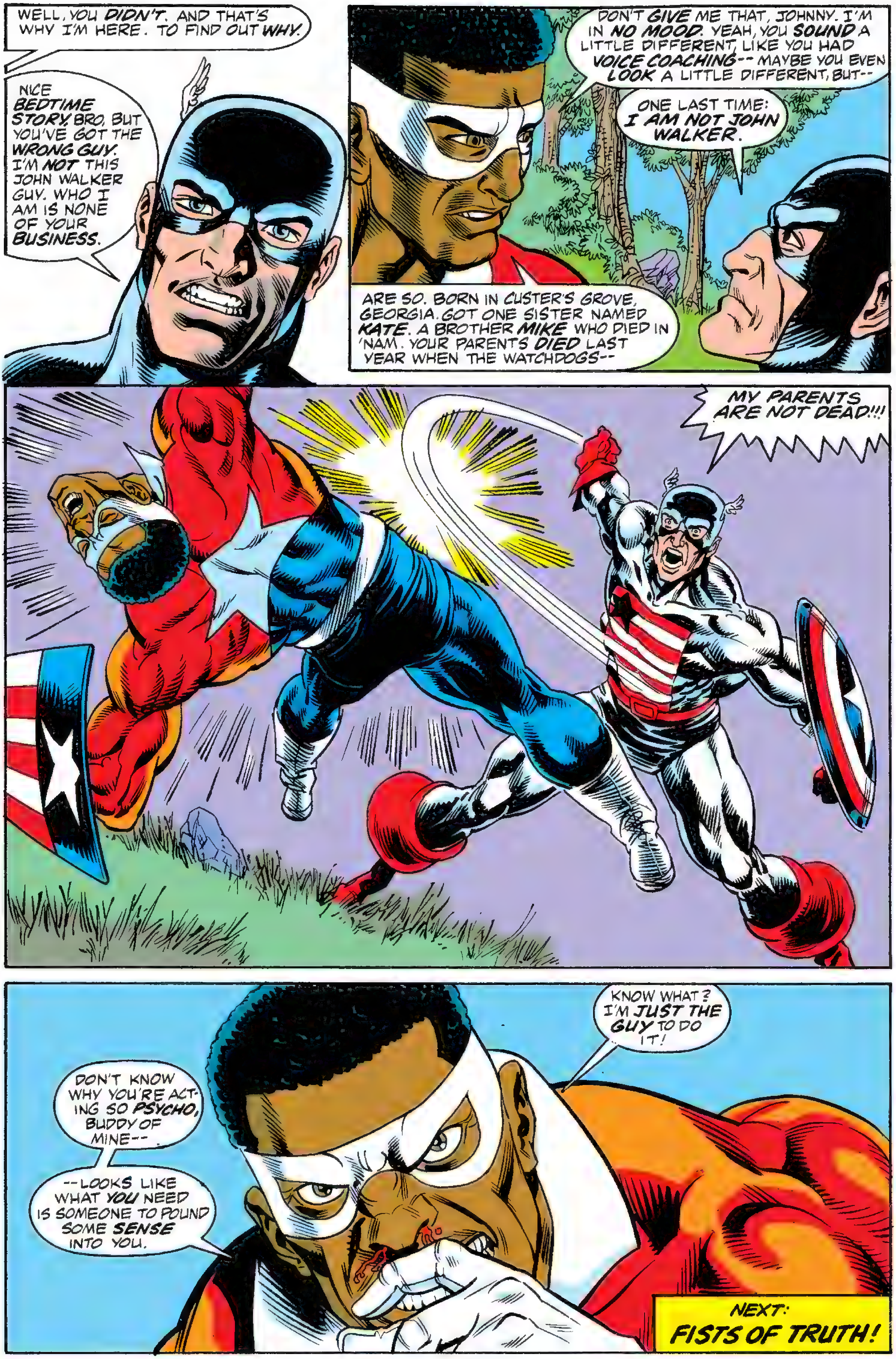

IF *THAT* DOESN'T BRING WHOEVER'S HERE RUNNING--!
YO, OVER *HERE.*
?
SO IF IT *AIN'T* THE GREAT CAPTAIN AMERICA.
PLEASED TO *MEETCHA,* OLD MAN. THEY CALL ME *NAPALM...*
...ON ACCOUNT'A THIS *TRICK* I KNOW HOW TA DO.
THING IS, I CAN ONLY DO IT *ONCE.*
CLIC
!
BDOOM
CONTINUED IN TWO WEEKS!


Stan Lee PRESENTS:
BATTLESTAR
AGENT PROVOCATEUR
WEST COAST AVENGERS COMPOUND, PALOS VERDE, CALIFORNIA...
LATE AFTERNOON...
THREE DAYS AND FOUR NIGHTS... FOUR QUINJET TAKE-OFFS, THREE ARRIVALS. THREE SUPPLY TRUCK DELIVERIES TO THE FRONT GATE, ONE PIZZA DELIVERY. TWO LIMOUSINES LEFT AND CAME BACK. CHEVY PICK-UP DRIVEN BY THE LANDSCAPERS CAME AND LEFT.
STILL NO CONFIRMED SIGHTING OF THE MAN.
EL SUPREMO NACHO BITES
GRUENWALD WRITES
BAGLEY PENCILS
HUDSON INKS
ELIOPOULOS LETTERS
YOMTOV COLORS


RATIONS SHOULD HOLD OUT ANOTHER TWO DAYS AND NIGHTS, IF I CONSERVE THEM. IF HE DOESN'T SHOW UP BY THEN, I'LL HAVE TO--
WAIT! SOMEBODY ON A ONE-MAN FLYING 'CYCLE.
IT'S HIM-- IT'S GOT TO BE.
SPTOOM
BA-ROOM
THAT GOT HIS ATTENTION.
HERE HE COMES...
...LEADING WITH HIS SHIELD.
THUNK


SAY YOUR PRAYERS, CREEPO!
NOBODY TAKES POTSHOTS AT ME AND GETS AWAY WITH IT!
CHILL OUT, MAN, I WAS JUST TRYING TO GET YOUR ATTENTION.
OH, YOU'VE GOT IT ALL RIGHT-- NOW YOU'D BETTER PRAY YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH IT!
HERE.
IT IS YOU, ISN'T IT, JOHNNY?
I'D KNOW YOUR MOVES ANYWHERE.


THUNK
NAME'S NOT JOHNNY. YOU MUST BE MISTAKING ME FOR SOMEBODY ELSE. I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU BEFORE IN MY LIFE.
HEY, MAN, YOU CAN FOOL THE REST OF THE WORLD, BUT NOT ME.
YOU'RE REALLY GONNA MAKE ME STAND HERE AND REMIND YOU OF HOW FAR WE GO BACK, HUH? OKAY. BE LIKE THAT.
"WE MET BACK IN BASIC AT FORT BRAGG. DESPITE YOUR BEING A SOUTHERN WHITE AND ME BEING A NOTHERN BLACK, WE HIT IT OFF REAL WELL, BECAME BEST BUDDIES...
"AFTER OUR HITCH, WE SIGNED UP FOR THE POWER BROKER'S EXPERIMENTAL STRENGTH AUGMENTATION PROCESS TOGETHER.
"WORKED ON US BOTH.
"INSTEAD OF GOING INTO UNLIMITED CLASS WRESTLING, YOU DECIDED TO BECOME A MEDIA HERO OF A DIFFERENT STRIPE. YOU BECAME THE SUPER-PATRIOT, I ENLISTED AS ONE OF YOUR BUCKIES.
"THEN WHEN THE OLD CAPTAIN AMERICA WENT AWOL, THE FEDS TAPPED US TO REPLACE HIM. WE BECAME THE NEW CAPTAIN AMERICA AND BUCKY...
"EVERY MINUTE WE WEREN'T CARRYING OUT A MISSION FOR UNCLE SAM WE WERE PRACTICING, TRYING TO BECOME WORLD CLASS FIGHTERS.
"THEN THE OLD CAP DECIDED TO COME BACK, AND FOR SOME REASON YOU DECIDED TO GIVE THE JOB BACK TO HIM. AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE ANNOUNCING THE SWITCHOVER, SOME SNIPER PLUGGED YOU.
"I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD, MAN.
BUT AFTER YOUR BODY WENT MISSING FROM THE MORGUE, I GOT SUSPICIOUS AND SPENT THE NEXT COUPLE WEEKS PLAYING SHERLOCK HOLMES.
ALL THE CLUES POINTED TO ONE THING. YOU, JOHN WALKER, WEREN'T REALLY DEAD. I FINALLY GOT OUR SUPERIOR, MIZ COOPER, TO ADMIT IT TO ME. YOUR ASSASSINATON WAS FAKED.
SHE SAID YOU WERE BEING SENT UNDERCOVER. SHE SAID I SHOULD JUST FORGET YOU AND IF YOU WANTED TO CONTACT ME YOU WOULD.


WELL, YOU DIDN'T. AND THAT'S WHY I'M HERE. TO FIND OUT WHY.
NICE BEDTIME STORY, BRO. BUT YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG GUY. I'M NOT THIS JOHN WALKER GUY. WHO I AM IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.
DON'T GIVE ME THAT, JOHNNY. I'M IN NO MOOD. YEAH, YOU SOUND A LITTLE DIFFERENT, LIKE YOU HAD VOICE COACHING-- MAYBE YOU EVEN LOOK A LITTLE DIFFERENT, BUT--
ONE LAST TIME: I AM NOT JOHN WALKER.
ARE SO. BORN IN CUSTER'S GROVE, GEORGIA. GOT ONE SISTER NAMED KATE. A BROTHER MIKE WHO DIED IN 'NAM. YOUR PARENTS DIED LAST YEAR WHEN THE WATCHDOGS--
MY PARENTS ARE NOT DEAD!!!
DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE ACTING SO PSYCHO, BUDDY OF MINE--
--LOOKS LIKE WHAT YOU NEED IS SOMEONE TO POUND SOME SENSE INTO YOU.
KNOW WHAT? I'M JUST THE GUY TO DO IT!
NEXT: FISTS OF TRUTH!

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THE BLACK WIDOW vs. DIAMONDBACK!
Ron '90
Dan Bulanadi
PLUS: THE RETURN OF BULLSEYE!

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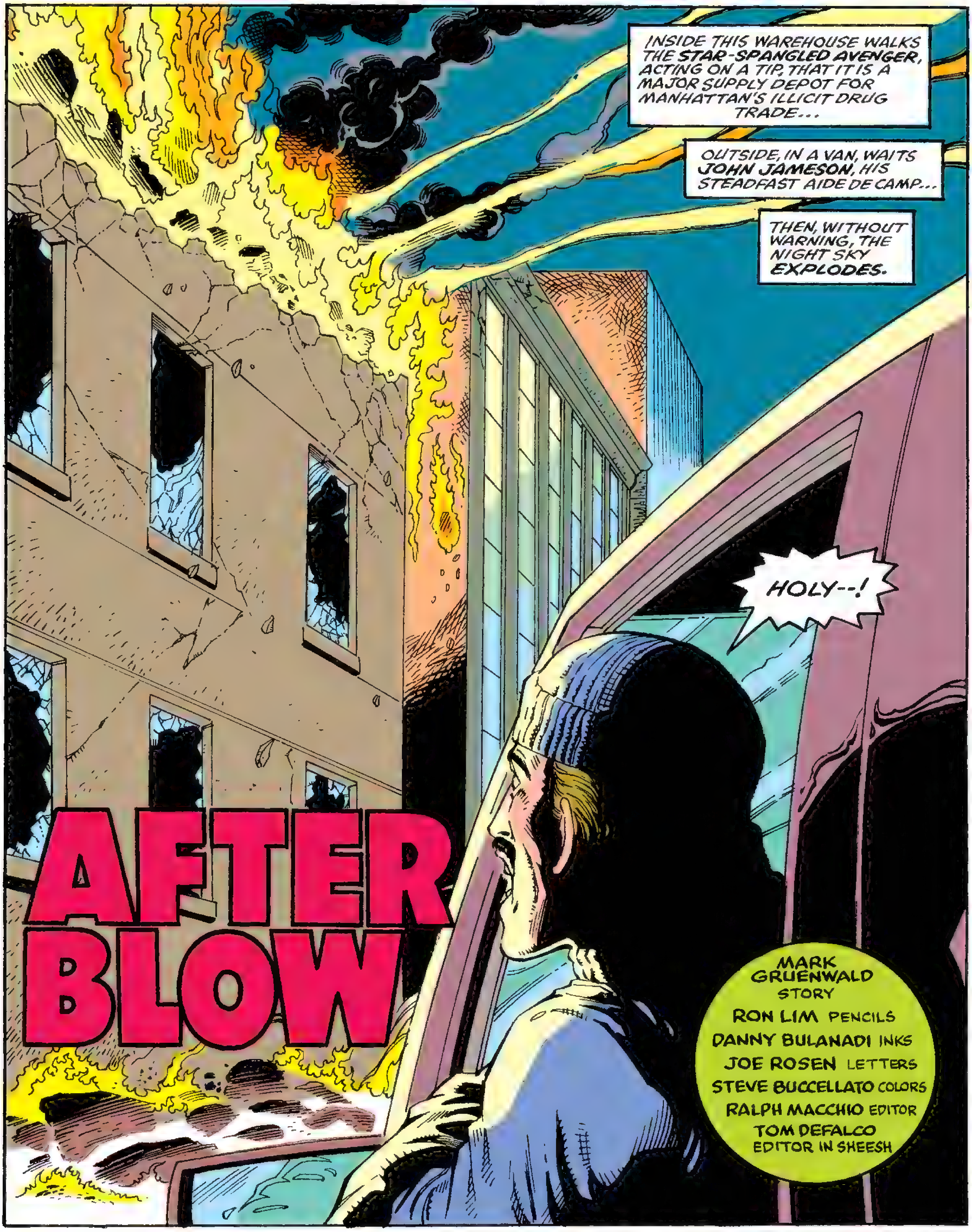
STEVE ROGERS . . . BORN IN THE U.S.A., RAISED TO CHERISH THE IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY, ENDOWED WITH A SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE, AND DRIVEN TO BE THE MOST CAPABLE COMBATANT IN THE WORLD. NOW AS BOTH LONE CRUSADER AND LEADER OF THE RENOWNED AVENGERS, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM! STAN LEE PRESENTS . . . CAPTAIN AMERICA!


INSIDE THIS WAREHOUSE WALKS THE STAR-SPANGLED AVENGER, ACTING ON A TIP, THAT IT IS A MAJOR SUPPLY DEPOT FOR MANHATTAN'S ILLICIT DRUG TRADE...
OUTSIDE, IN A VAN, WAITS JOHN JAMESON, HIS STEADFAST AIDE DE CAMP...
THEN, WITHOUT WARNING, THE NIGHT SKY EXPLODES.
HOLY--!
AFTER BLOW
MARK GRUENWALD STORY
RON LIM PENCILS
DANNY BULANADI INKS
JOE ROSEN LETTERS
STEVE BUCCELLATO COLORS
RALPH MACCHIO EDITOR
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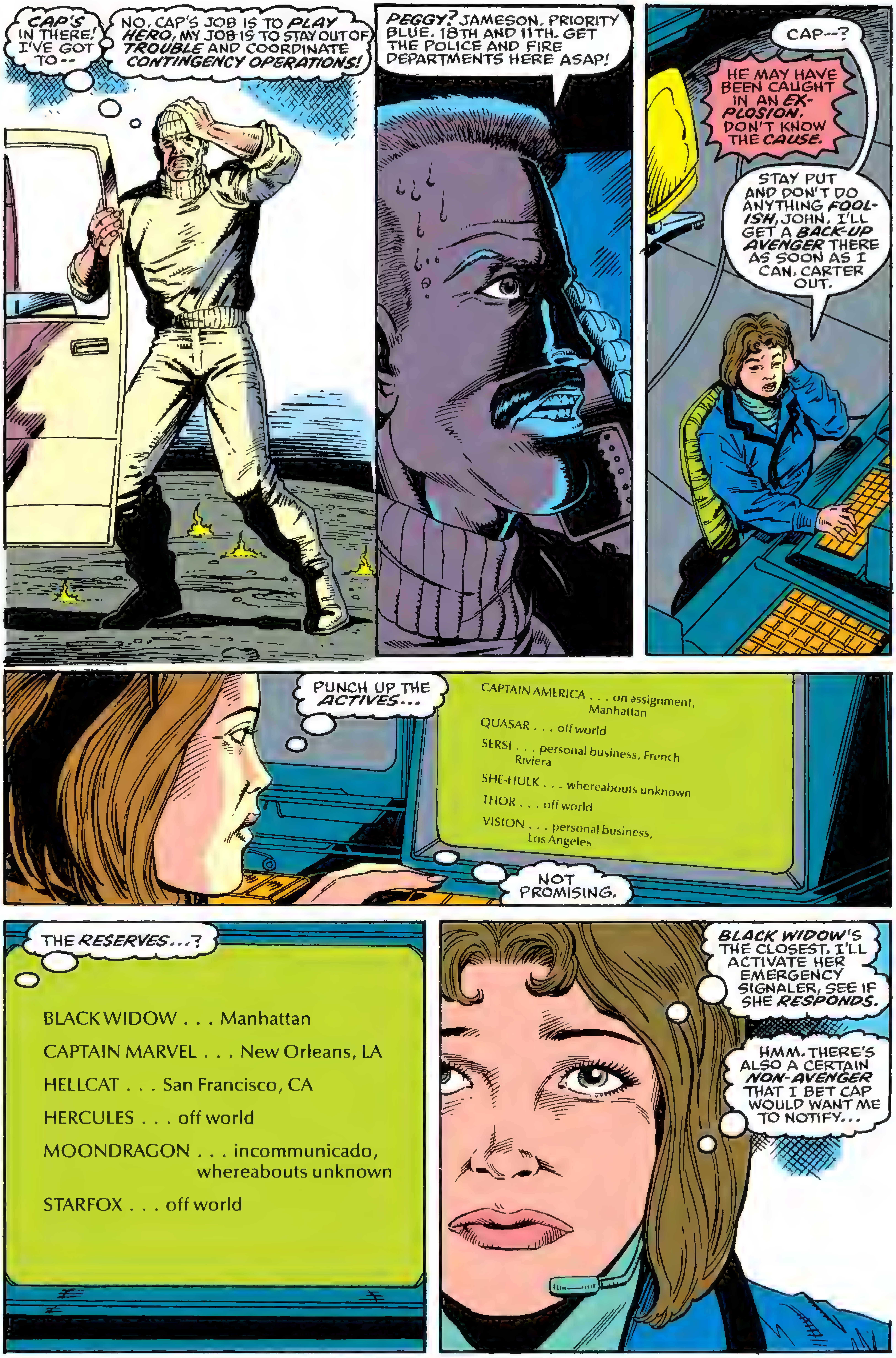
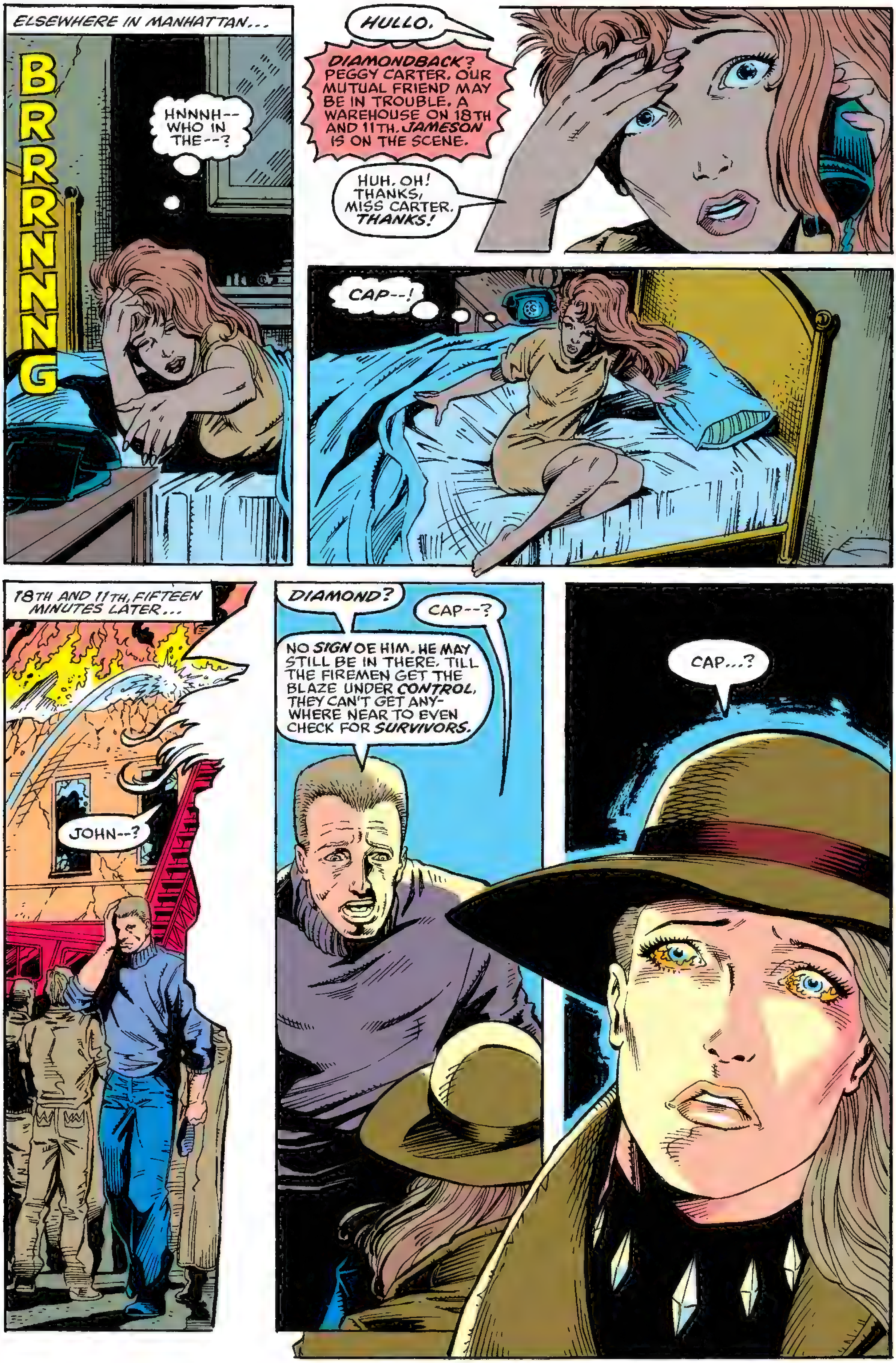
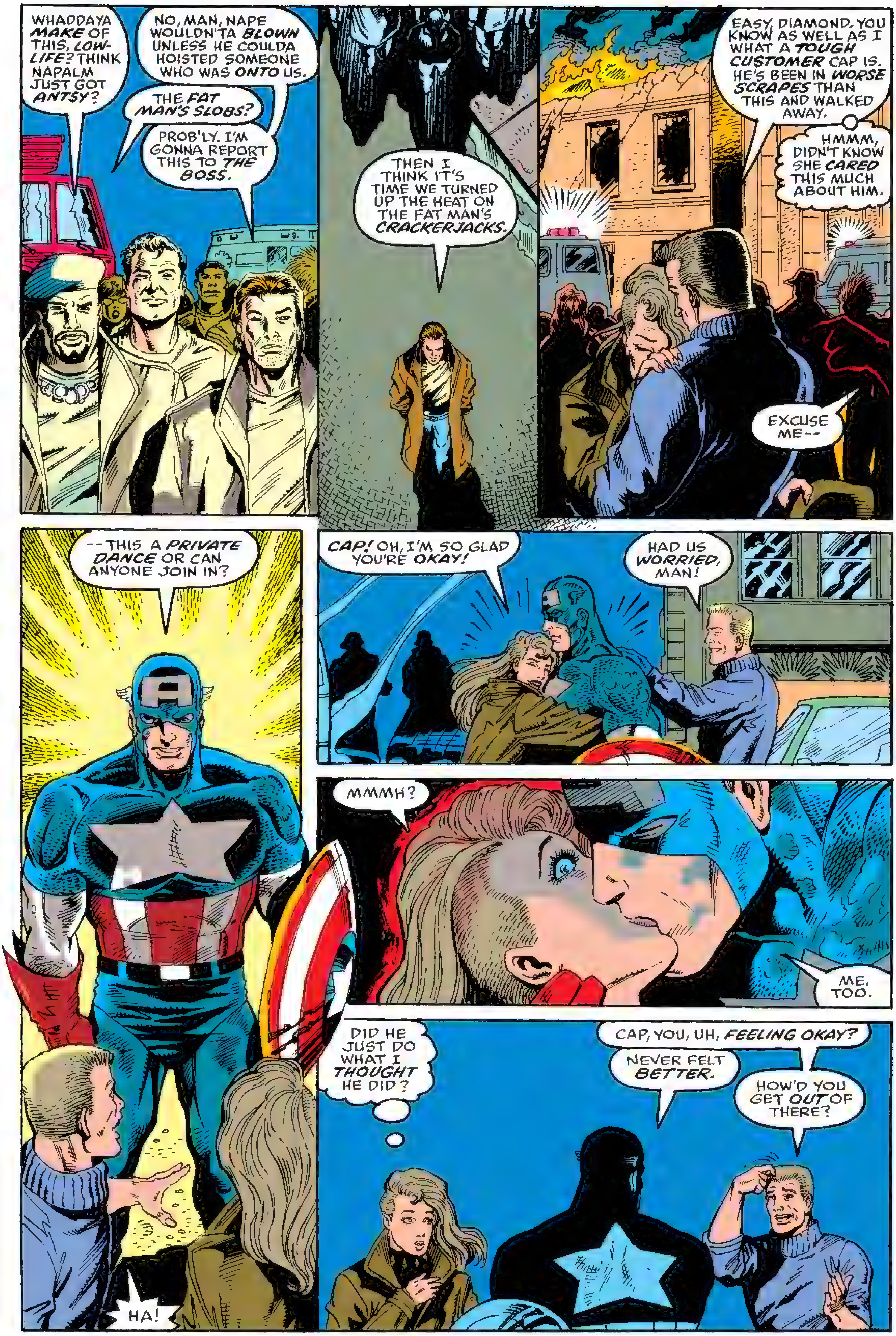
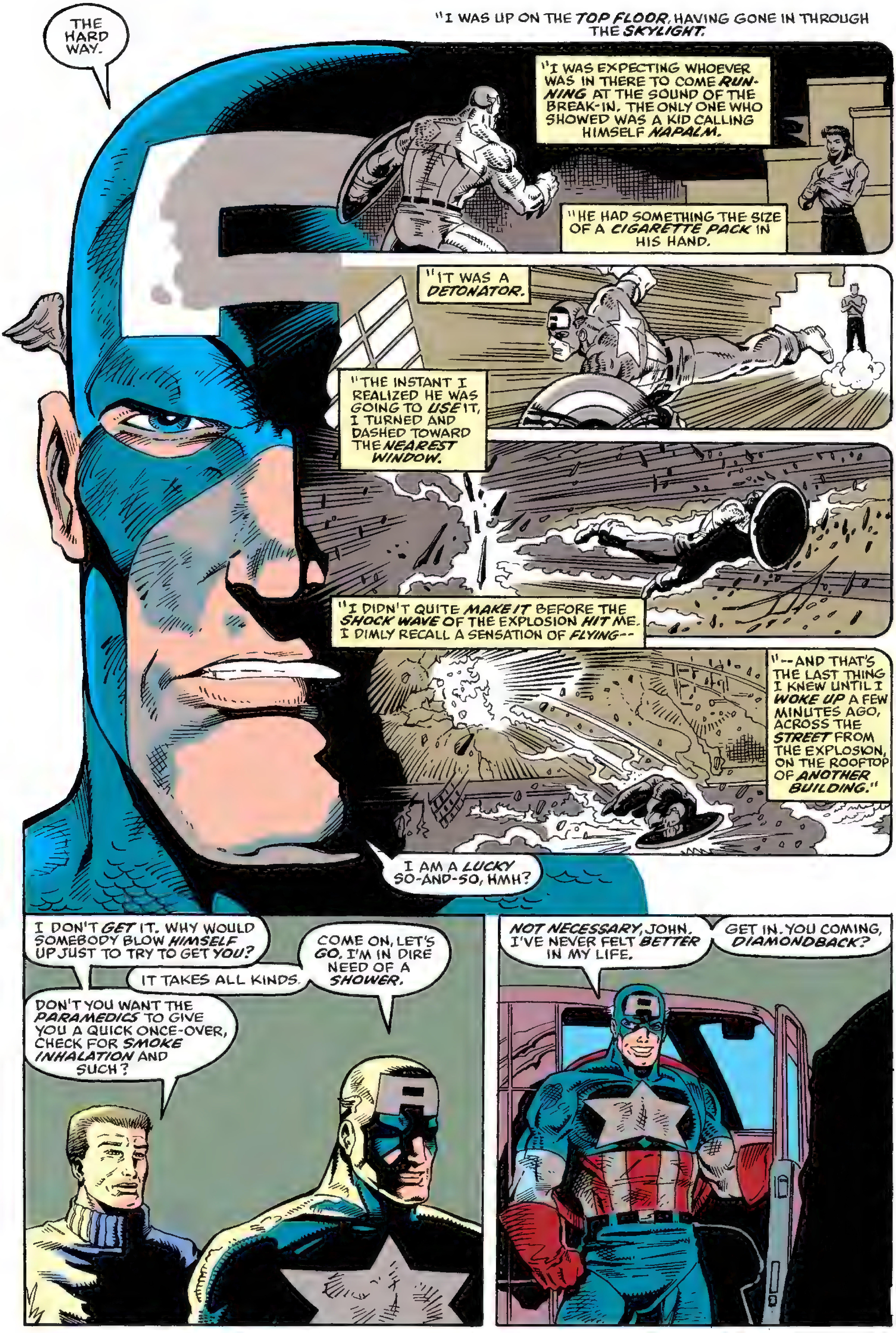
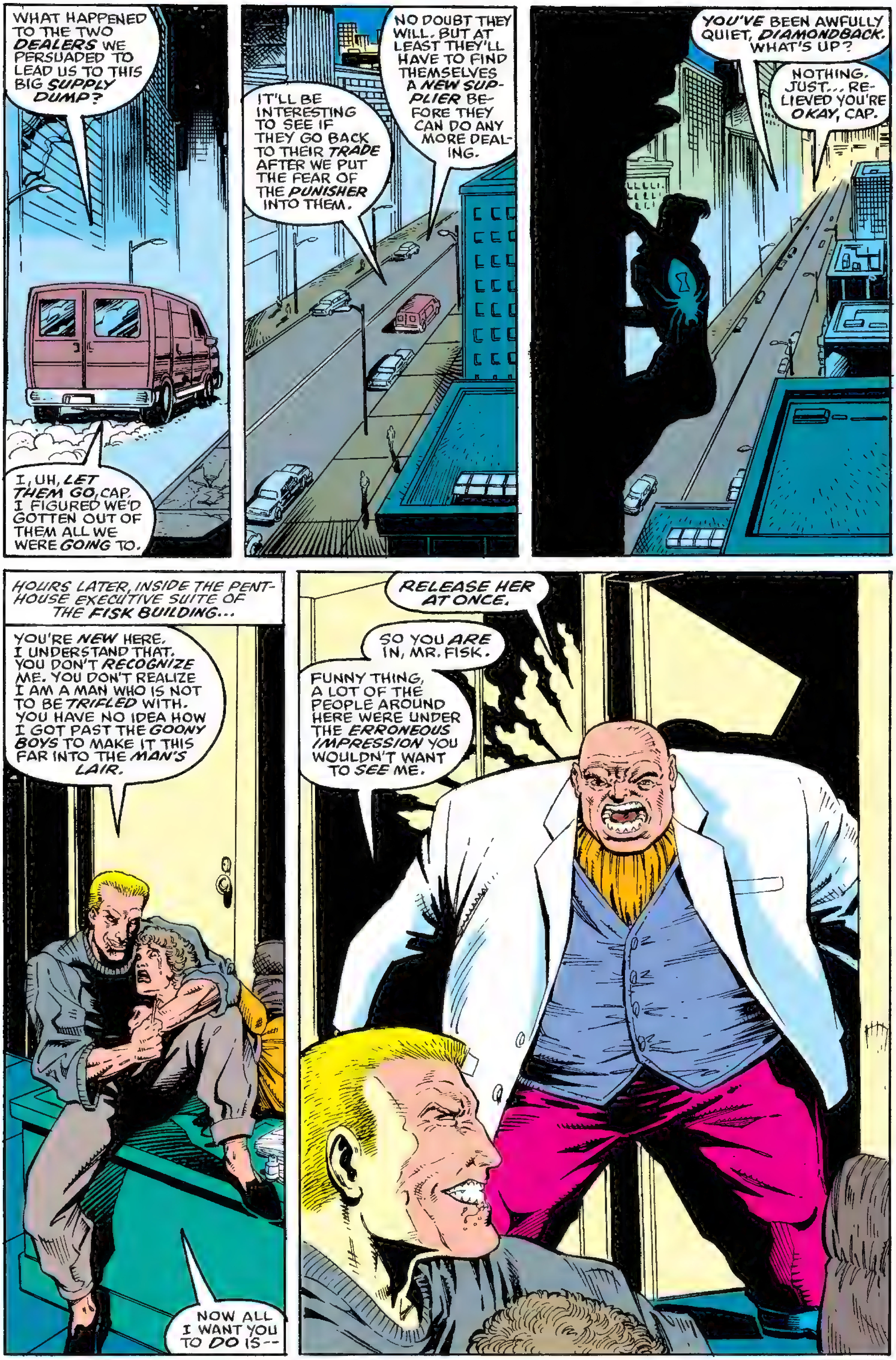
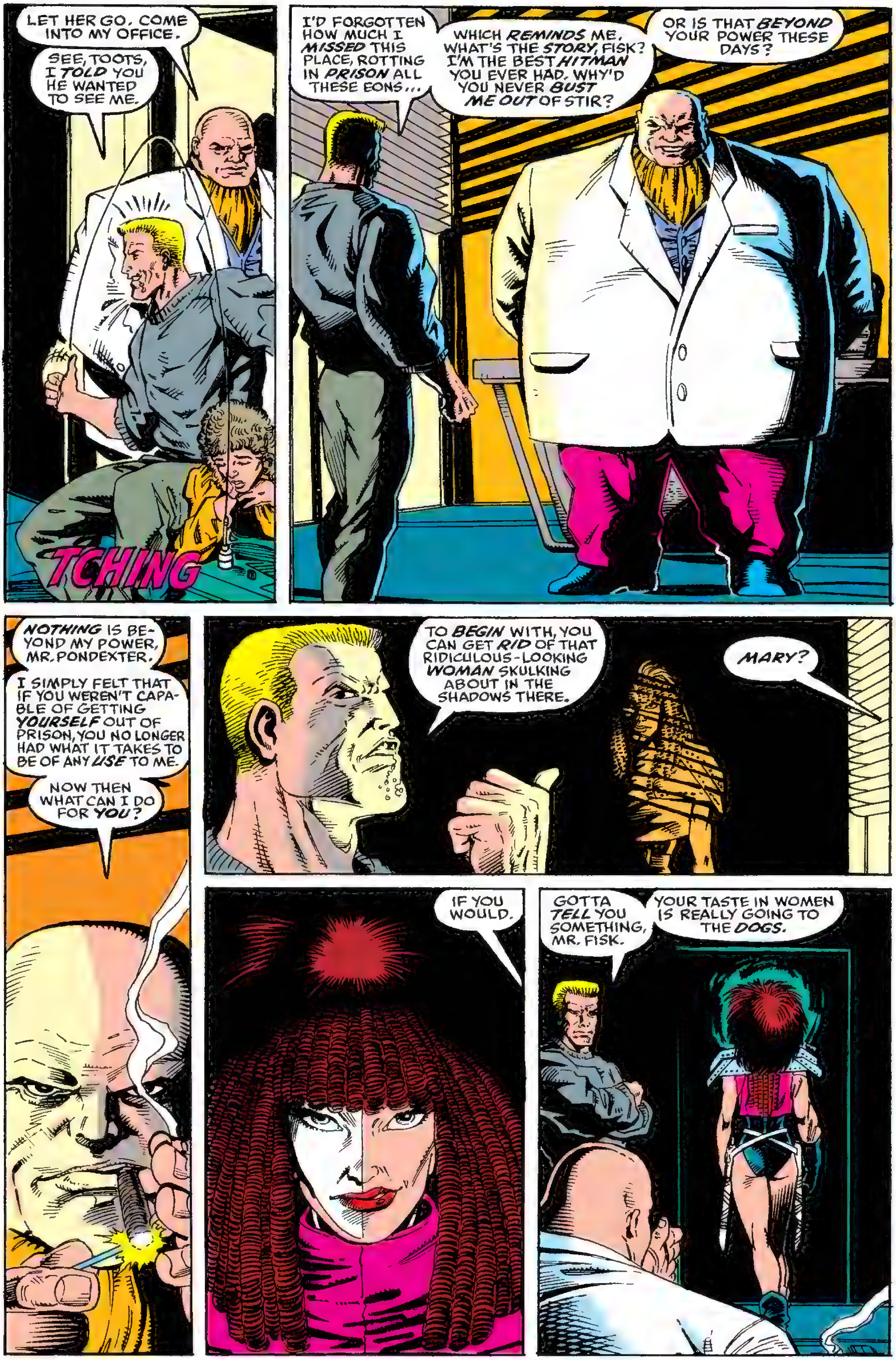

CAP'S IN THERE! I'VE GOT TO--
NO, CAP'S JOB IS TO *PLAY HERO.* MY JOB IS TO STAY OUT OF *TROUBLE* AND COORDINATE *CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS!*
PEGGY? JAMESON. PRIORITY BLUE. 18TH AND 11TH. GET THE POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS HERE ASAP!
CAP--?
HE MAY HAVE BEEN CAUGHT IN AN *EXPLOSION.* DON'T KNOW THE *CAUSE.*
STAY PUT AND DON'T DO ANYTHING *FOOLISH,* JOHN. I'LL GET A *BACK-UP AVENGER* THERE AS SOON AS I CAN. CARTER OUT.
PUNCH UP THE *ACTIVES...*
CAPTAIN AMERICA . . . on assignment, Manhattan
QUASAR . . . off world
SERSI . . . personal business, French Riviera
SHE-HULK . . . whereabouts unknown
THOR . . . off world
VISION . . . personal business, Los Angeles
NOT PROMISING.
THE *RESERVES...?*
BLACK WIDOW . . . Manhattan
CAPTAIN MARVEL . . . New Orleans, LA
HELLCAT . . . San Francisco, CA
HERCULES . . . off world
MOONDRAGON . . . incommunicado, whereabouts unknown
STARFOX . . . off world
BLACK WIDOW'S THE CLOSEST. I'LL ACTIVATE HER EMERGENCY SIGNALER, SEE IF SHE *RESPONDS.*
HMM. THERE'S ALSO A CERTAIN *NON-AVENGER* THAT I BET CAP WOULD WANT ME TO NOTIFY...

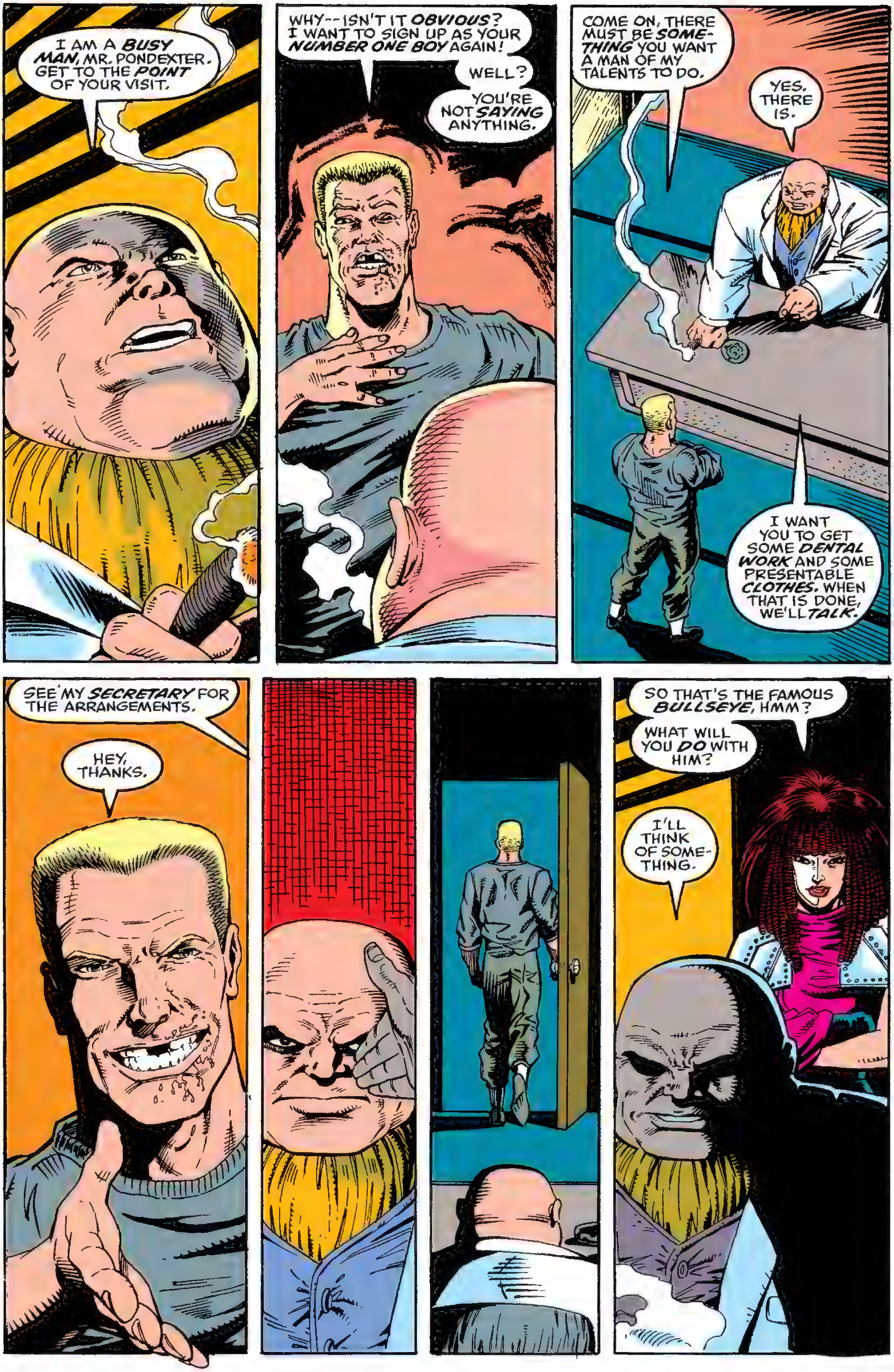

ELSEWHERE IN MANHATTAN...
BRRRRNNNG
HNNNH-- WHO IN THE--?
HULLO.
DIAMONDBACK? PEGGY CARTER. OUR MUTUAL FRIEND MAY BE IN TROUBLE. A WAREHOUSE ON 18TH AND 11TH. JAMESON IS ON THE SCENE.
HUH. OH! THANKS, MISS CARTER. THANKS!
CAP--!
18TH AND 11TH, FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER...
JOHN--?
DIAMOND?
CAP--?
NO SIGN OF HIM. HE MAY STILL BE IN THERE. TILL THE FIREMEN GET THE BLAZE UNDER CONTROL, THEY CAN'T GET ANYWHERE NEAR TO EVEN CHECK FOR SURVIVORS.
CAP...?

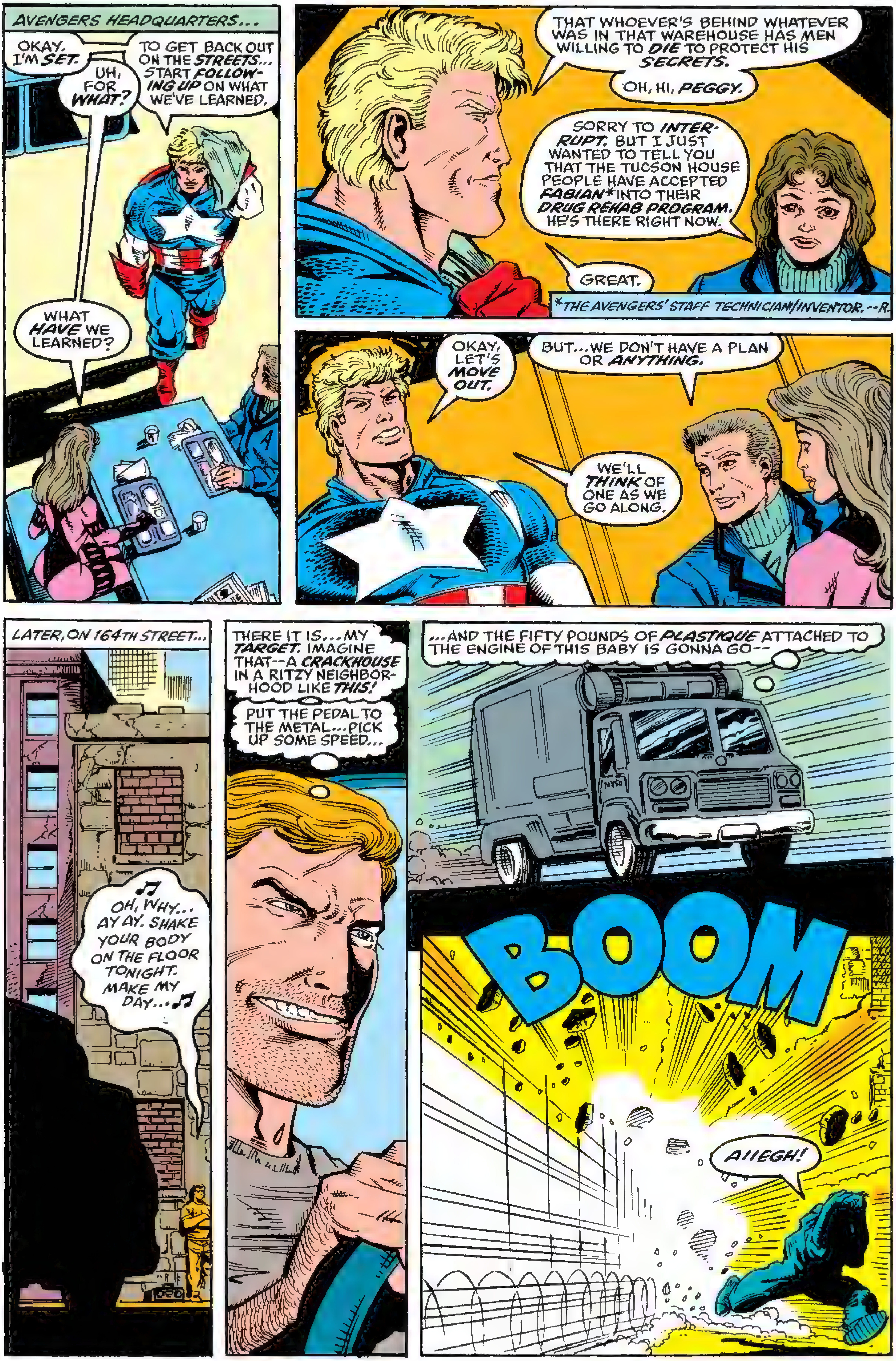

WHADDAYA MAKE OF THIS, LOW-LIFE? THINK NAPALM JUST GOT ANTSY?
NO, MAN, NAPE WOULDN'TA BLOWN UNLESS HE COULDA HOISTED SOMEONE WHO WAS ONTO US.
THE FAT MAN'S SLOBS?
PROB'LY. I'M GONNA REPORT THIS TO THE BOSS.
THEN I THINK IT'S TIME WE TURNED UP THE HEAT ON THE FAT MAN'S CRACKERJACKS.
EASY, DIAMOND. YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I WHAT A TOUGH CUSTOMER CAP IS. HE'S BEEN IN WORSE SCRAPES THAN THIS AND WALKED AWAY.
HMMM, DIDN'T KNOW SHE CARED THIS MUCH ABOUT HIM.
EXCUSE ME--
--THIS A PRIVATE DANCE OR CAN ANYONE JOIN IN?
HA!
CAP! OH, I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE OKAY!
HAD US WORRIED, MAN!
MMMH?
ME, TOO.
DID HE JUST DO WHAT I THOUGHT HE DID?
CAP, YOU, UH, FEELING OKAY?
NEVER FELT BETTER.
HOW'D YOU GET OUT OF THERE?

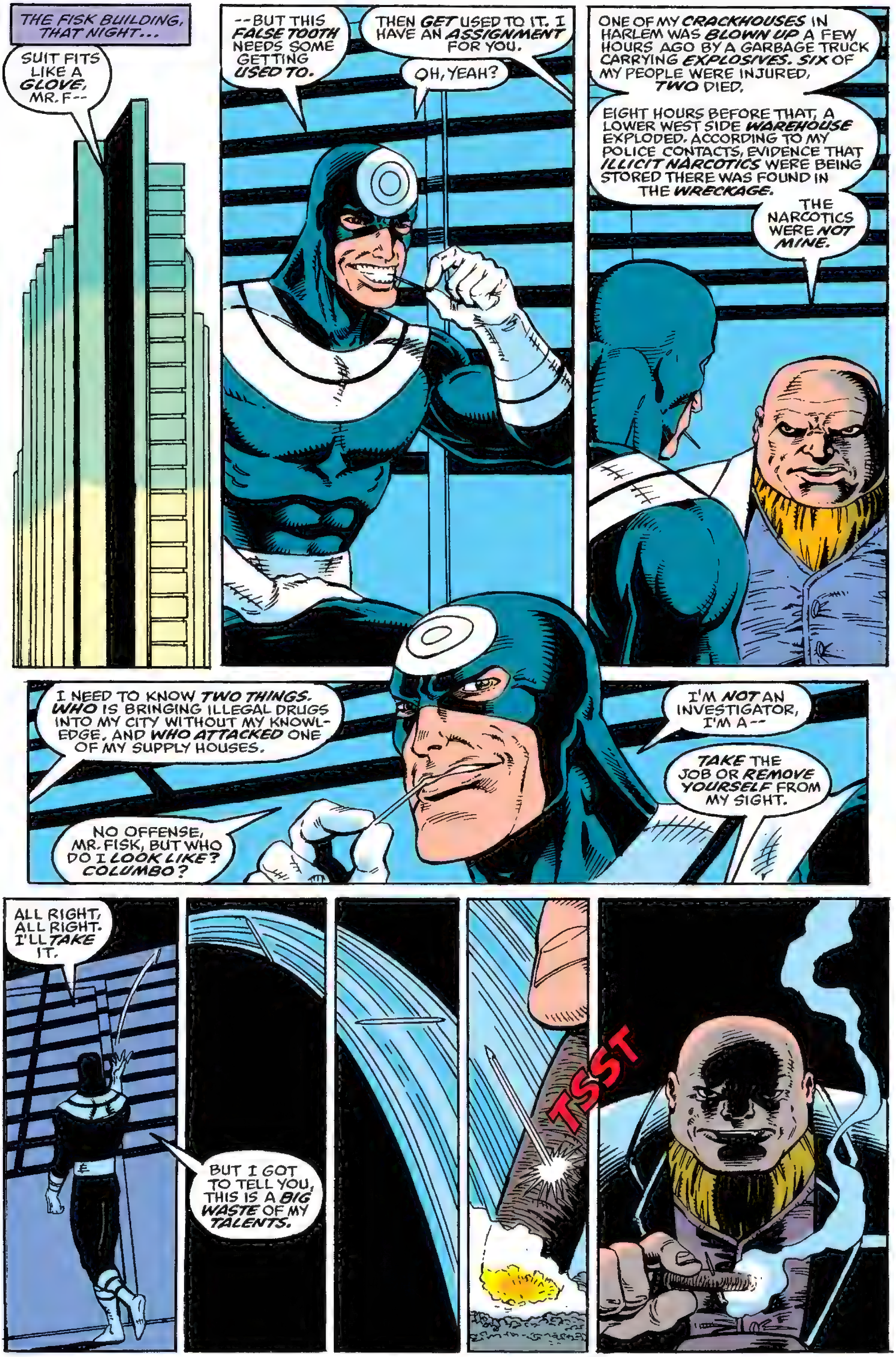

THE HARD WAY.
"I WAS UP ON THE *TOP FLOOR*, HAVING GONE IN THROUGH THE *SKYLIGHT*.
"I WAS EXPECTING WHOEVER WAS IN THERE TO COME *RUNNING* AT THE SOUND OF THE BREAK-IN. THE ONLY ONE WHO SHOWED WAS A KID CALLING HIMSELF *NAPALM*.
"HE HAD SOMETHING THE SIZE OF A *CIGARETTE PACK* IN HIS HAND.
"IT WAS A *DETONATOR*.
"THE INSTANT I REALIZED HE WAS GOING TO *USE* IT, I TURNED AND DASHED TOWARD THE *NEAREST WINDOW*.
"I DIDN'T QUITE *MAKE IT* BEFORE THE *SHOCK WAVE* OF THE EXPLOSION *HIT* ME. I DIMLY RECALL A SENSATION OF *FLYING*--
"--AND THAT'S THE LAST THING I KNEW UNTIL I *WOKE UP* A FEW MINUTES AGO, ACROSS THE *STREET* FROM THE EXPLOSION, ON THE ROOFTOP OF *ANOTHER BUILDING*."
I AM A *LUCKY* SO-AND-SO, HMH?
I DON'T *GET* IT. WHY WOULD SOMEBODY BLOW *HIMSELF* UP JUST TO TRY TO GET *YOU*?
IT TAKES ALL KINDS.
COME ON, LET'S *GO*. I'M IN DIRE NEED OF A *SHOWER*.
DON'T YOU WANT THE *PARAMEDICS* TO GIVE YOU A QUICK ONCE-OVER, CHECK FOR *SMOKE INHALATION* AND SUCH?
NOT NECESSARY, JOHN. I'VE NEVER FELT *BETTER* IN MY LIFE.
GET IN. YOU COMING, *DIAMONDBACK*?

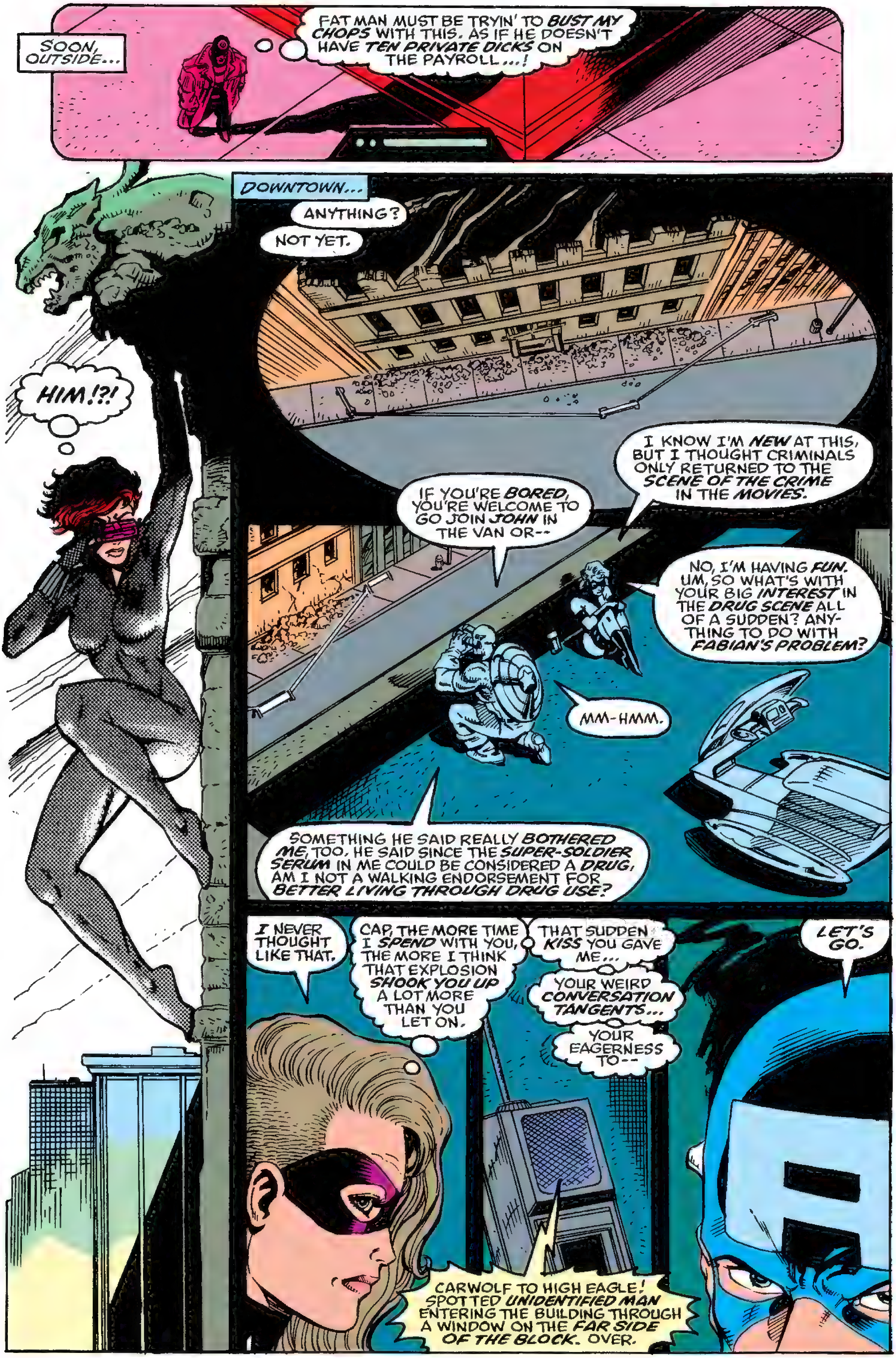

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE TWO DEALERS WE PERSUADED TO LEAD US TO THIS BIG SUPPLY DUMP?
I, UH, LET THEM GO, CAP. I FIGURED WE'D GOTTEN OUT OF THEM ALL WE WERE GOING TO.
IT'LL BE INTERESTING TO SEE IF THEY GO BACK TO THEIR TRADE AFTER WE PUT THE FEAR OF THE PUNISHER INTO THEM.
NO DOUBT THEY WILL. BUT AT LEAST THEY'LL HAVE TO FIND THEMSELVES A NEW SUPPLIER BEFORE THEY CAN DO ANY MORE DEALING.
YOU'VE BEEN AWFULLY QUIET, DIAMONDBACK. WHAT'S UP?
NOTHING. JUST... RELIEVED YOU'RE OKAY, CAP.
HOURS LATER, INSIDE THE PENTHOUSE EXECUTIVE SUITE OF THE FISK BUILDING...
YOU'RE NEW HERE. I UNDERSTAND THAT. YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE ME. YOU DON'T REALIZE I AM A MAN WHO IS NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH. YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW I GOT PAST THE GOONY BOYS TO MAKE IT THIS FAR INTO THE MAN'S LAIR.
NOW ALL I WANT YOU TO DO IS--
RELEASE HER AT ONCE.
SO YOU ARE IN, MR. FISK.
FUNNY THING, A LOT OF THE PEOPLE AROUND HERE WERE UNDER THE ERRONEOUS IMPRESSION YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO SEE ME.


LET HER GO. COME INTO MY OFFICE.
SEE, TOOTS, I *TOLD* YOU HE WANTED TO SEE ME.
TCHING
I'D FORGOTTEN HOW MUCH I *MISSED* THIS PLACE, ROTTING IN *PRISON* ALL THESE EONS...
WHICH *REMINDS* ME. WHAT'S THE *STORY*, FISK? I'M THE BEST *HITMAN* YOU EVER HAD. WHY'D YOU NEVER *BUST ME OUT* OF STIR?
OR IS THAT *BEYOND* YOUR POWER THESE DAYS?
NOTHING IS BEYOND MY POWER, MR. PONDEXTER.
I SIMPLY FELT THAT IF YOU WEREN'T CAPABLE OF GETTING *YOURSELF* OUT OF PRISON, YOU NO LONGER HAD WHAT IT TAKES TO BE OF ANY *USE* TO ME.
NOW THEN WHAT CAN I DO FOR *YOU*?
TO *BEGIN* WITH, YOU CAN GET *RID* OF THAT RIDICULOUS-LOOKING *WOMAN* SKULKING ABOUT IN THE SHADOWS THERE.
MARY?
IF YOU WOULD.
GOTTA *TELL* YOU SOMETHING, MR. FISK.
YOUR TASTE IN WOMEN IS REALLY GOING TO THE *DOGS*.

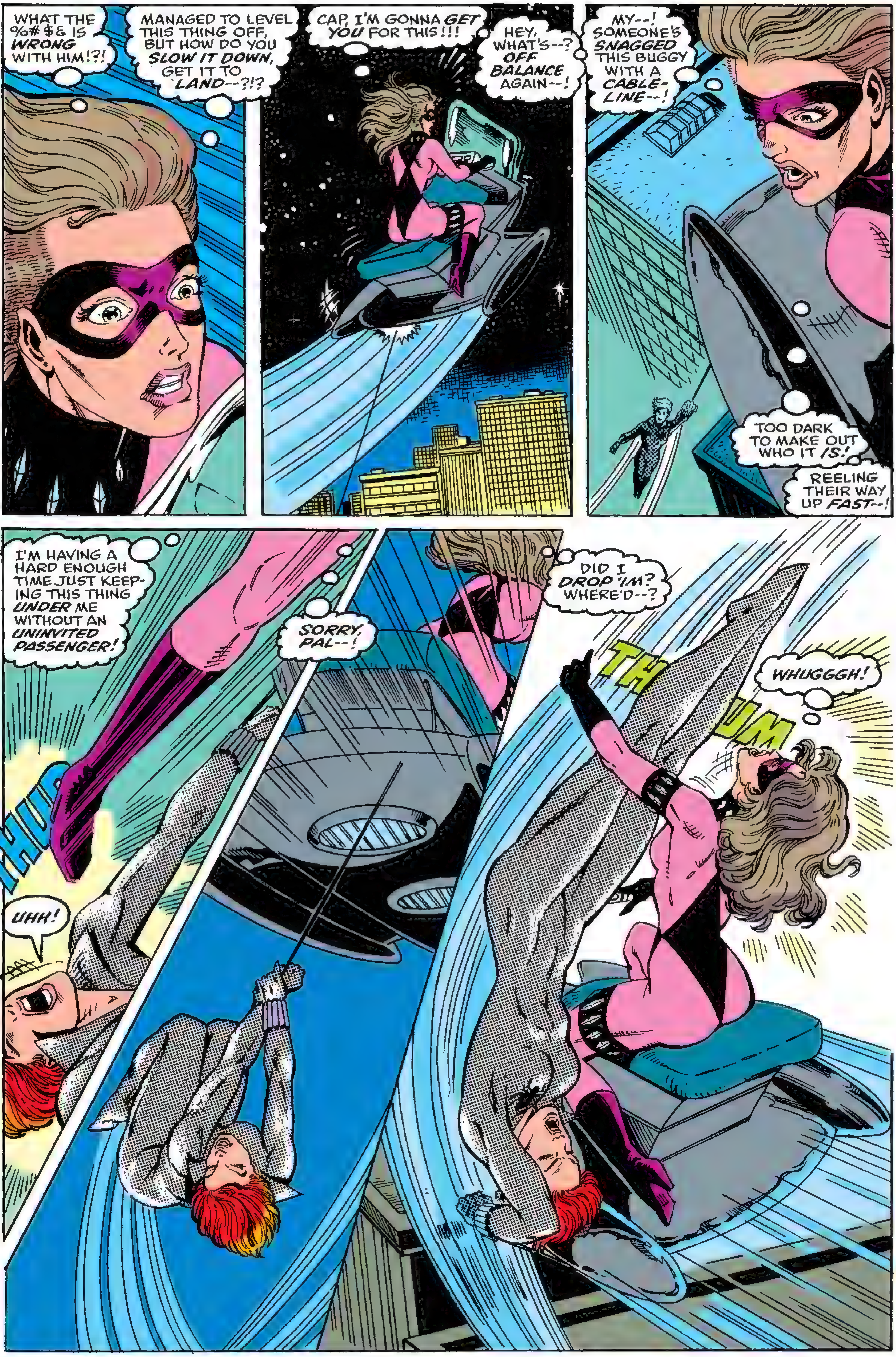

I AM A BUSY MAN, MR. PONDEXTER. GET TO THE POINT OF YOUR VISIT.
WHY--ISN'T IT OBVIOUS? I WANT TO SIGN UP AS YOUR NUMBER ONE BOY AGAIN!
WELL?
YOU'RE NOT SAYING ANYTHING.
COME ON, THERE MUST BE SOMETHING YOU WANT A MAN OF MY TALENTS TO DO.
YES. THERE IS.
I WANT YOU TO GET SOME DENTAL WORK AND SOME PRESENTABLE CLOTHES. WHEN THAT IS DONE, WE'LL TALK.
SEE MY SECRETARY FOR THE ARRANGEMENTS.
HEY, THANKS.
SO THAT'S THE FAMOUS BULLSEYE, HMM?
WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH HIM?
I'LL THINK OF SOMETHING.

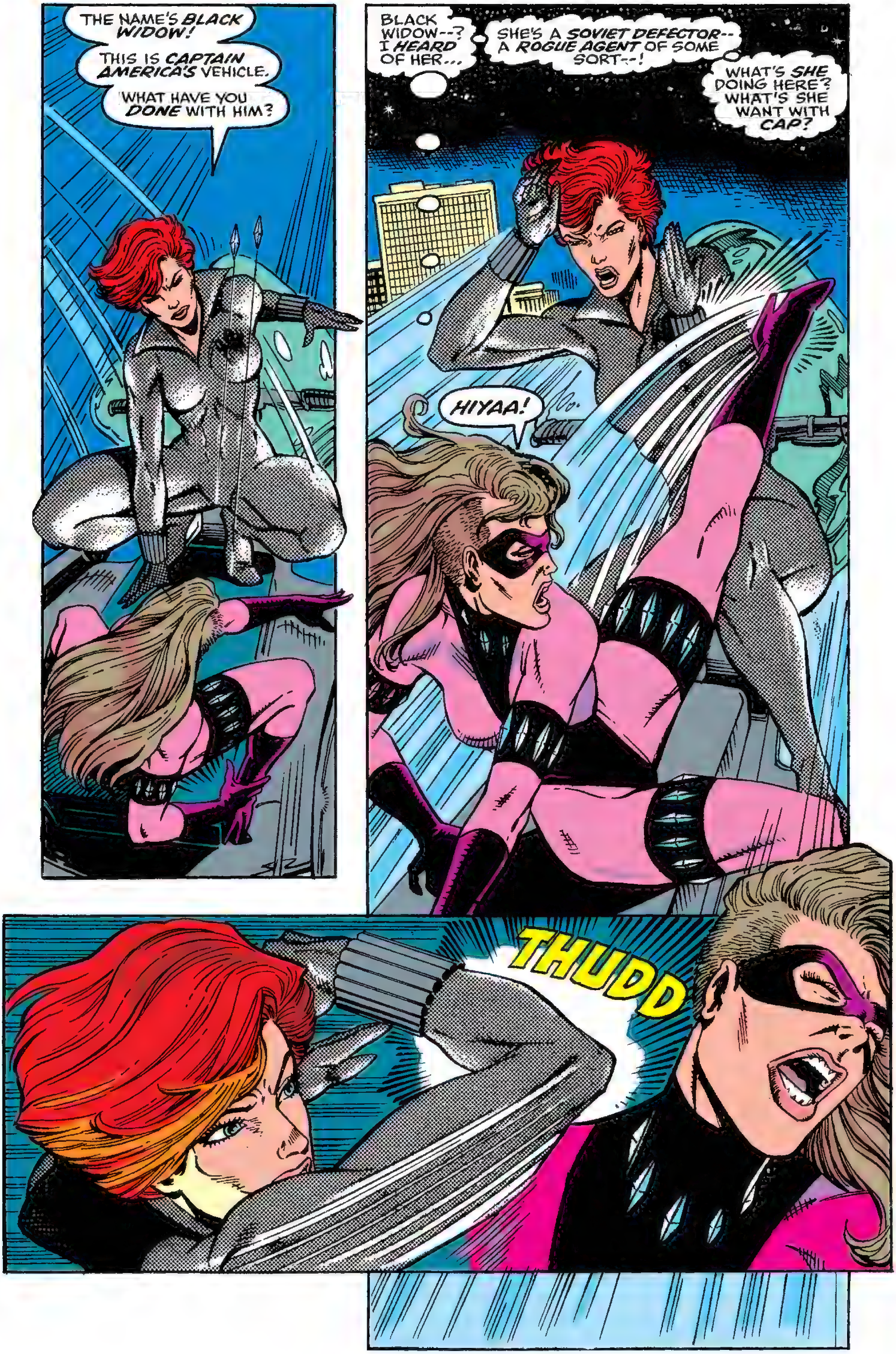

AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS...
OKAY. I'M SET.
UH, FOR WHAT?
TO GET BACK OUT ON THE STREETS... START FOLLOWING UP ON WHAT WE'VE LEARNED.
WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?
THAT WHOEVER'S BEHIND WHATEVER WAS IN THAT WAREHOUSE HAS MEN WILLING TO DIE TO PROTECT HIS SECRETS.
OH, HI, PEGGY.
SORRY TO INTERRUPT, BUT I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU THAT THE TUCSON HOUSE PEOPLE HAVE ACCEPTED FABIAN* INTO THEIR DRUG REHAB PROGRAM. HE'S THERE RIGHT NOW.
GREAT.
*THE AVENGERS' STAFF TECHNICIAN/INVENTOR. --R.
OKAY, LET'S MOVE OUT.
BUT... WE DON'T HAVE A PLAN OR ANYTHING.
WE'LL THINK OF ONE AS WE GO ALONG.
LATER, ON 164TH STREET...
♫ OH, WHY... AY AY. SHAKE YOUR BODY ON THE FLOOR TONIGHT. MAKE MY DAY... ♫
THERE IT IS... MY TARGET. IMAGINE THAT--A CRACKHOUSE IN A RITZY NEIGHBORHOOD LIKE THIS!
PUT THE PEDAL TO THE METAL... PICK UP SOME SPEED...
...AND THE FIFTY POUNDS OF PLASTIQUE ATTACHED TO THE ENGINE OF THIS BABY IS GONNA GO--
BOOM
AIIEGH!

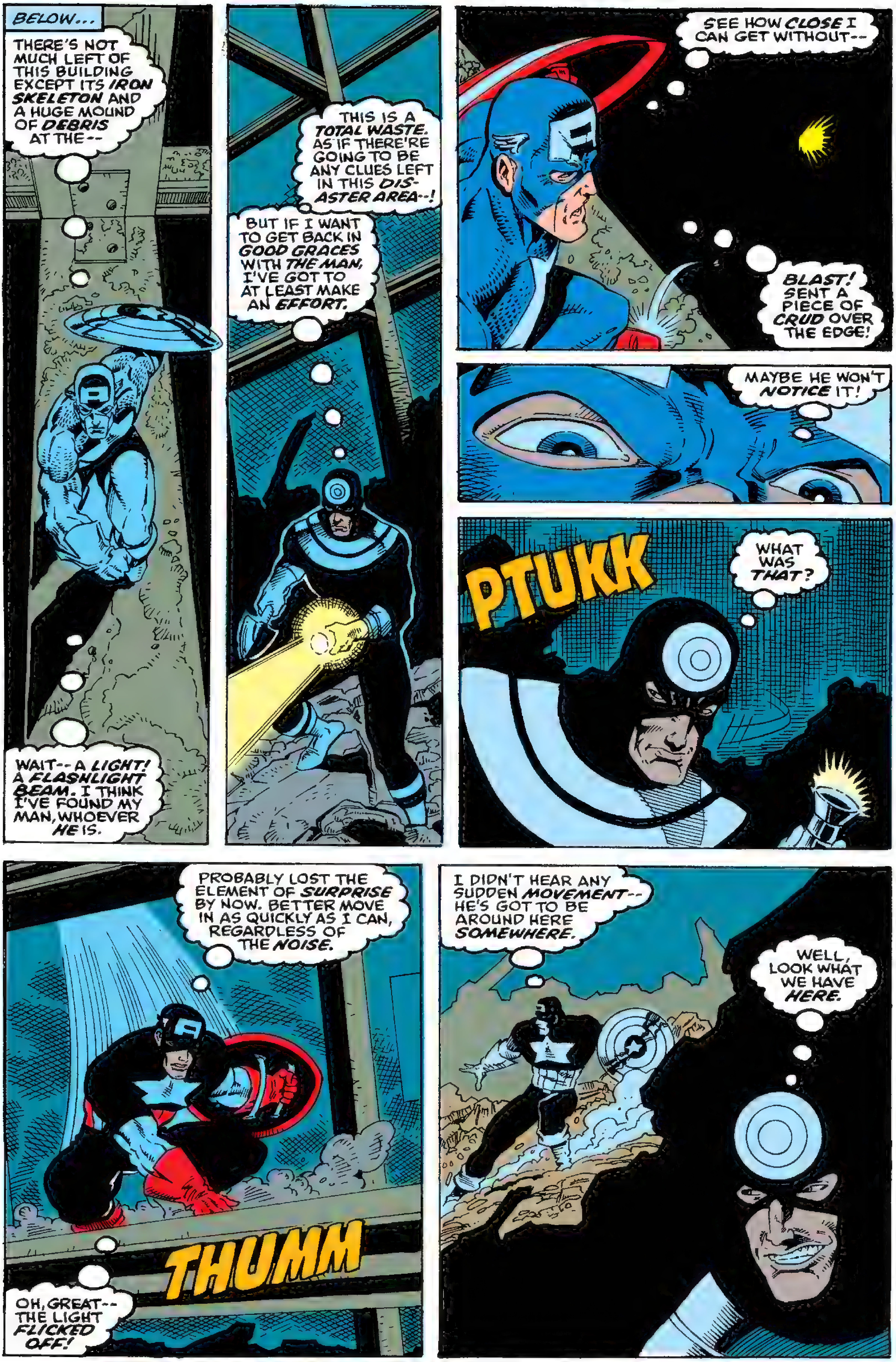

THE FISK BUILDING, THAT NIGHT...
SUIT FITS LIKE A GLOVE, MR. F--
--BUT THIS FALSE TOOTH NEEDS SOME GETTING USED TO.
THEN GET USED TO IT. I HAVE AN ASSIGNMENT FOR YOU.
OH, YEAH?
ONE OF MY CRACKHOUSES IN HARLEM WAS BLOWN UP A FEW HOURS AGO BY A GARBAGE TRUCK CARRYING EXPLOSIVES. SIX OF MY PEOPLE WERE INJURED, TWO DIED.
EIGHT HOURS BEFORE THAT, A LOWER WEST SIDE WAREHOUSE EXPLODED. ACCORDING TO MY POLICE CONTACTS, EVIDENCE THAT ILLICIT NARCOTICS WERE BEING STORED THERE WAS FOUND IN THE WRECKAGE.
THE NARCOTICS WERE NOT MINE.
I NEED TO KNOW TWO THINGS. WHO IS BRINGING ILLEGAL DRUGS INTO MY CITY WITHOUT MY KNOWLEDGE. AND WHO ATTACKED ONE OF MY SUPPLY HOUSES.
NO OFFENSE, MR. FISK, BUT WHO DO I LOOK LIKE? COLUMBO?
I'M NOT AN INVESTIGATOR, I'M A--
TAKE THE JOB OR REMOVE YOURSELF FROM MY SIGHT.
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT. I'LL TAKE IT.
BUT I GOT TO TELL YOU, THIS IS A BIG WASTE OF MY TALENTS.
TSST

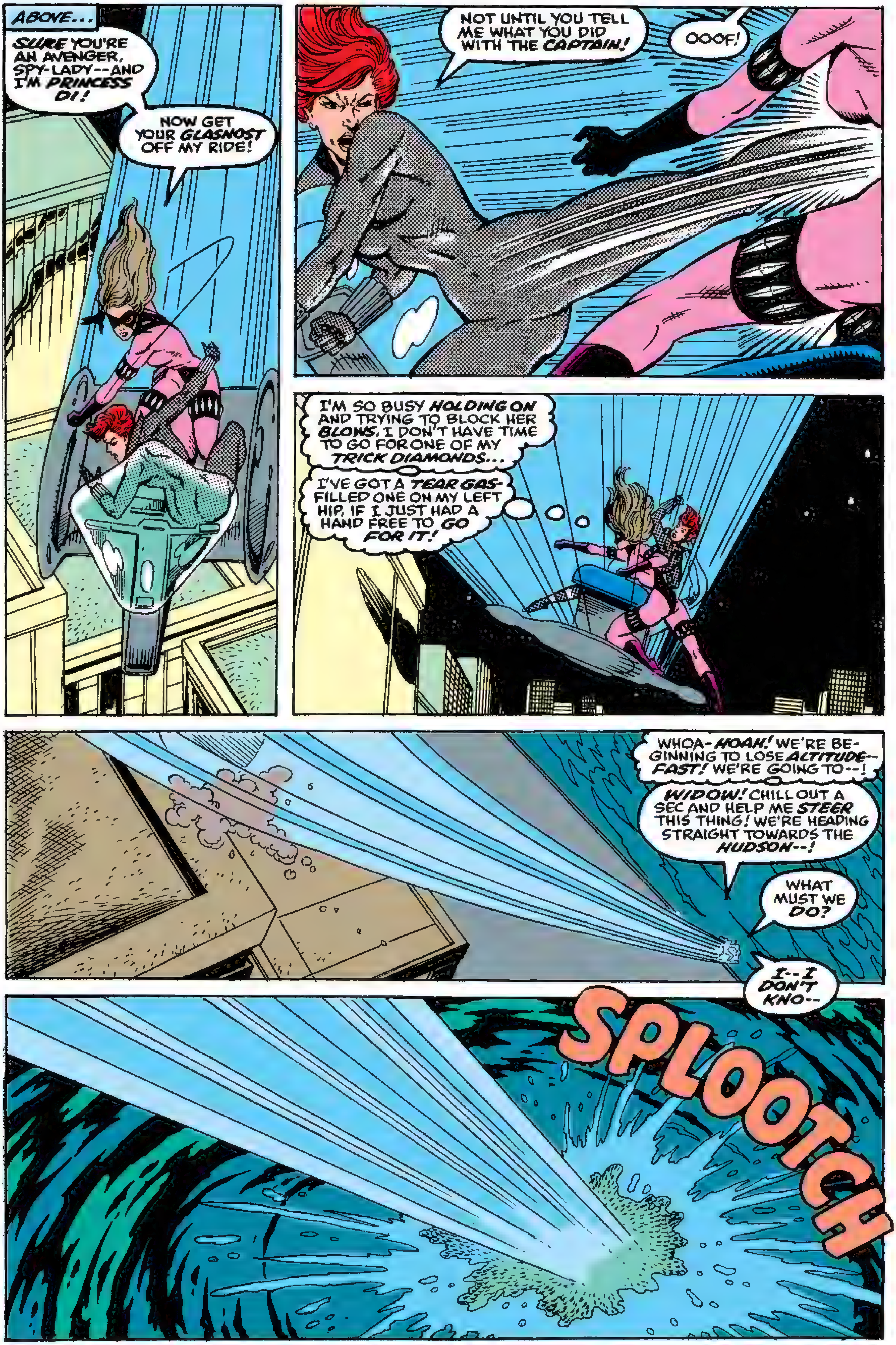

SOON, OUTSIDE...
FAT MAN MUST BE TRYIN' TO *BUST MY CHOPS* WITH THIS. AS IF HE DOESN'T HAVE *TEN PRIVATE DICKS* ON THE PAYROLL...!
DOWNTOWN...
ANYTHING?
NOT YET.
HIM!?!
I KNOW I'M *NEW* AT THIS, BUT I THOUGHT CRIMINALS ONLY RETURNED TO THE *SCENE OF THE CRIME* IN THE *MOVIES.*
IF YOU'RE *BORED,* YOU'RE WELCOME TO GO JOIN *JOHN* IN THE VAN OR--
NO, I'M HAVING *FUN.* UM, SO WHAT'S WITH YOUR BIG *INTEREST* IN THE *DRUG SCENE* ALL OF A SUDDEN? ANYTHING TO DO WITH *FABIAN'S PROBLEM?*
MM-HMM.
SOMETHING HE SAID REALLY *BOTHERED ME,* TOO. HE SAID SINCE THE *SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM* IN ME COULD BE CONSIDERED A *DRUG,* AM I NOT A WALKING ENDORSEMENT FOR *BETTER LIVING THROUGH DRUG USE?*
I NEVER THOUGHT LIKE THAT.
CAP, THE MORE TIME I *SPEND* WITH YOU, THE MORE I THINK THAT EXPLOSION *SHOOK YOU UP* A LOT MORE THAN YOU LET ON.
THAT SUDDEN *KISS* YOU GAVE ME...
YOUR WEIRD *CONVERSATION TANGENTS...*
YOUR EAGERNESS TO--
LET'S GO.
CARWOLF TO HIGH EAGLE! SPOTTED *UNIDENTIFIED MAN* ENTERING THE BUILDING THROUGH A WINDOW ON THE *FAR SIDE OF THE BLOCK.* OVER.

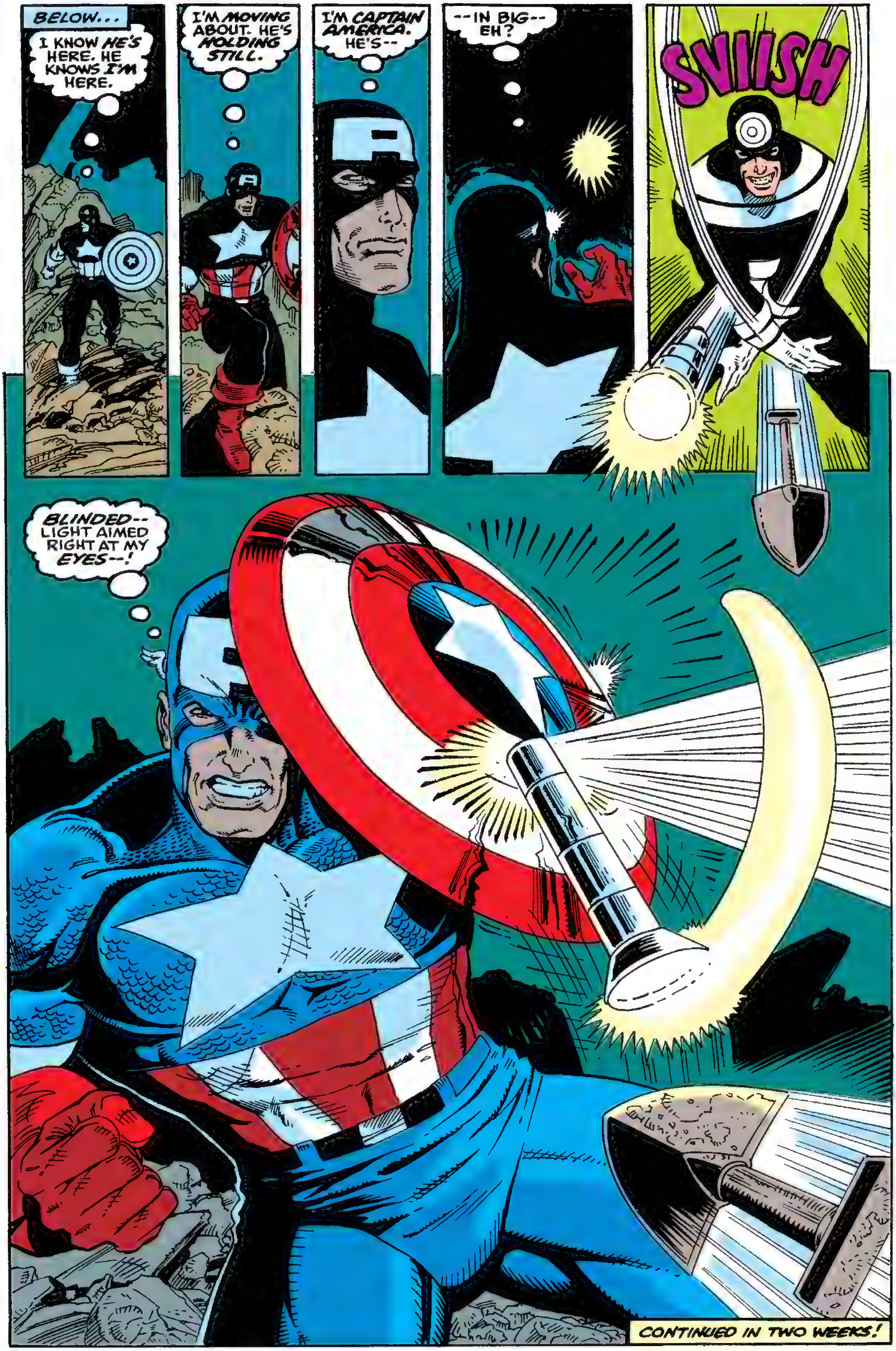
LET GO OF ME, DIAMOND.
HUH?
WAIT--YOU NEVER SHOWED ME HOW TO PILOT THIS THING!
I'M GETTING OFF HERE.
CAAAAAAP!
I-I'M GONNA HIT THAT BUILDING! GOTTA PULL UP-- PULL UP--!
OH--!

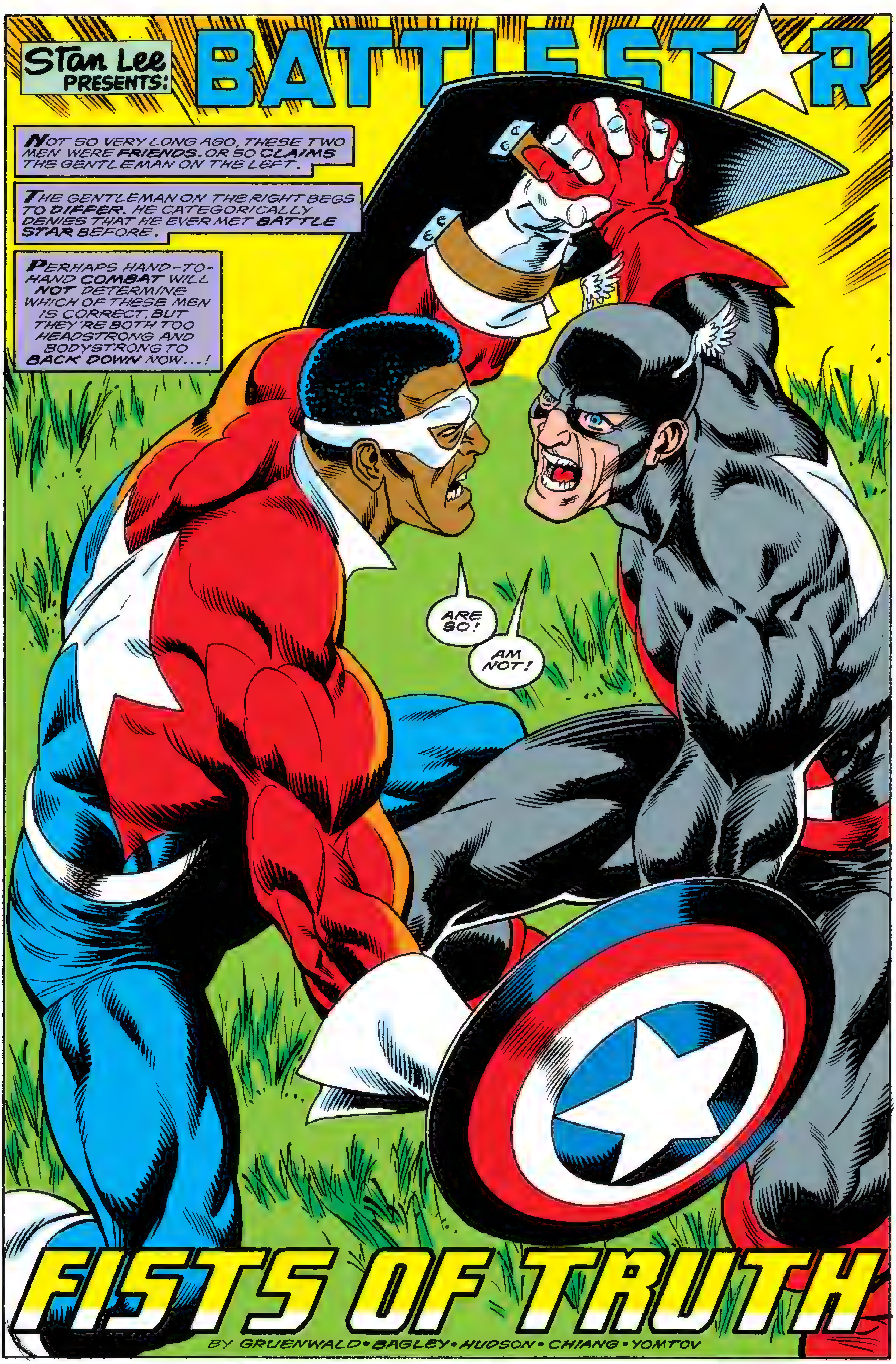

WHAT THE %#$& IS WRONG WITH HIM!?!
MANAGED TO LEVEL THIS THING OFF, BUT HOW DO YOU SLOW IT DOWN, GET IT TO LAND--?!?
CAP, I'M GONNA GET YOU FOR THIS!!!
HEY, WHAT'S--? OFF BALANCE AGAIN--!
MY--! SOMEONE'S SNAGGED THIS BUGGY WITH A CABLE-LINE--!
TOO DARK TO MAKE OUT WHO IT IS!
REELING THEIR WAY UP FAST--!
I'M HAVING A HARD ENOUGH TIME JUST KEEPING THIS THING UNDER ME WITHOUT AN UNINVITED PASSENGER!
THUD
UHH!
SORRY, PAL--!
DID I DROP 'IM? WHERE'D--?
THUM
WHUGGGH!

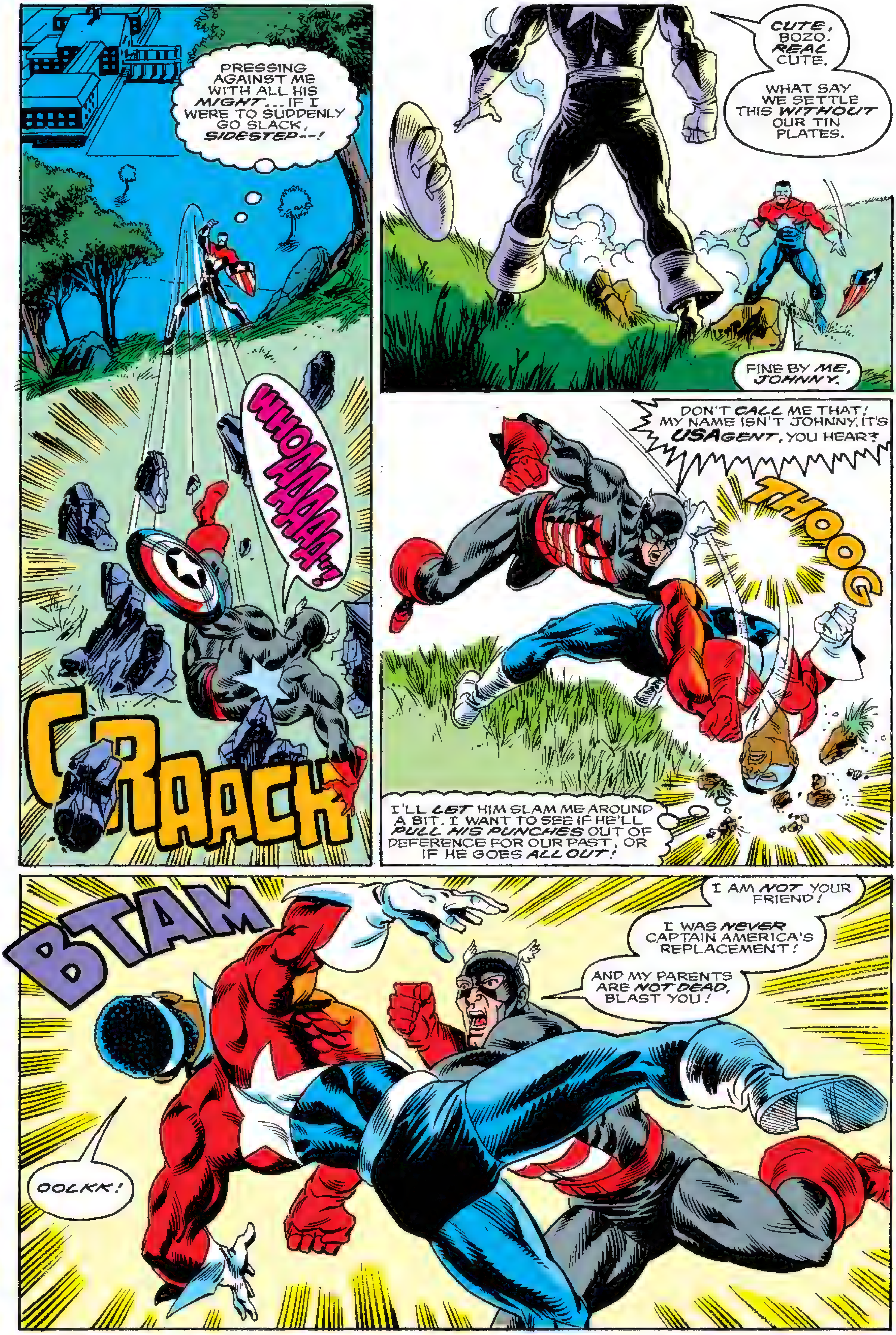

THE NAME'S BLACK WIDOW!
THIS IS CAPTAIN AMERICA'S VEHICLE.
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH HIM?
BLACK WIDOW--? I HEARD OF HER...
SHE'S A SOVIET DEFECTOR-- A ROGUE AGENT OF SOME SORT--!
WHAT'S SHE DOING HERE? WHAT'S SHE WANT WITH CAP?
HIYAA!
THUDD

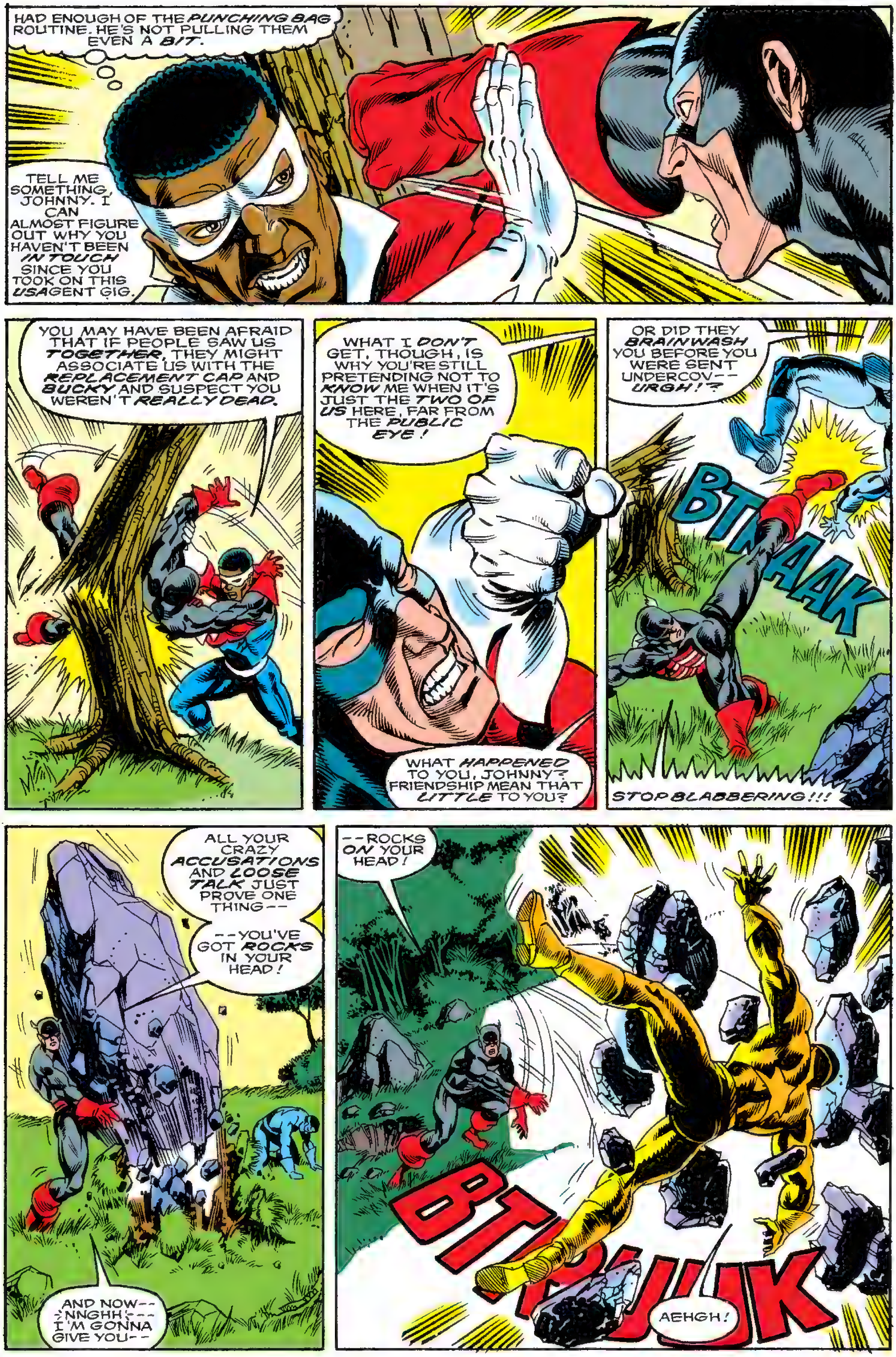

BELOW...
THERE'S NOT MUCH LEFT OF THIS BUILDING EXCEPT ITS IRON SKELETON AND A HUGE MOUND OF DEBRIS AT THE--
WAIT--A LIGHT! A FLASHLIGHT BEAM. I THINK I'VE FOUND MY MAN, WHOEVER HE IS.
THIS IS A TOTAL WASTE. AS IF THERE'RE GOING TO BE ANY CLUES LEFT IN THIS DISASTER AREA--!
BUT IF I WANT TO GET BACK IN GOOD GRACES WITH THE MAN, I'VE GOT TO AT LEAST MAKE AN EFFORT.
SEE HOW CLOSE I CAN GET WITHOUT--
BLAST! SENT A PIECE OF CRUD OVER THE EDGE!
MAYBE HE WON'T NOTICE IT!
PTUKK
WHAT WAS THAT?
PROBABLY LOST THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE BY NOW. BETTER MOVE IN AS QUICKLY AS I CAN, REGARDLESS OF THE NOISE.
THUMM
OH, GREAT-- THE LIGHT FLICKED OFF!
I DIDN'T HEAR ANY SUDDEN MOVEMENT-- HE'S GOT TO BE AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE.
WELL, LOOK WHAT WE HAVE HERE.

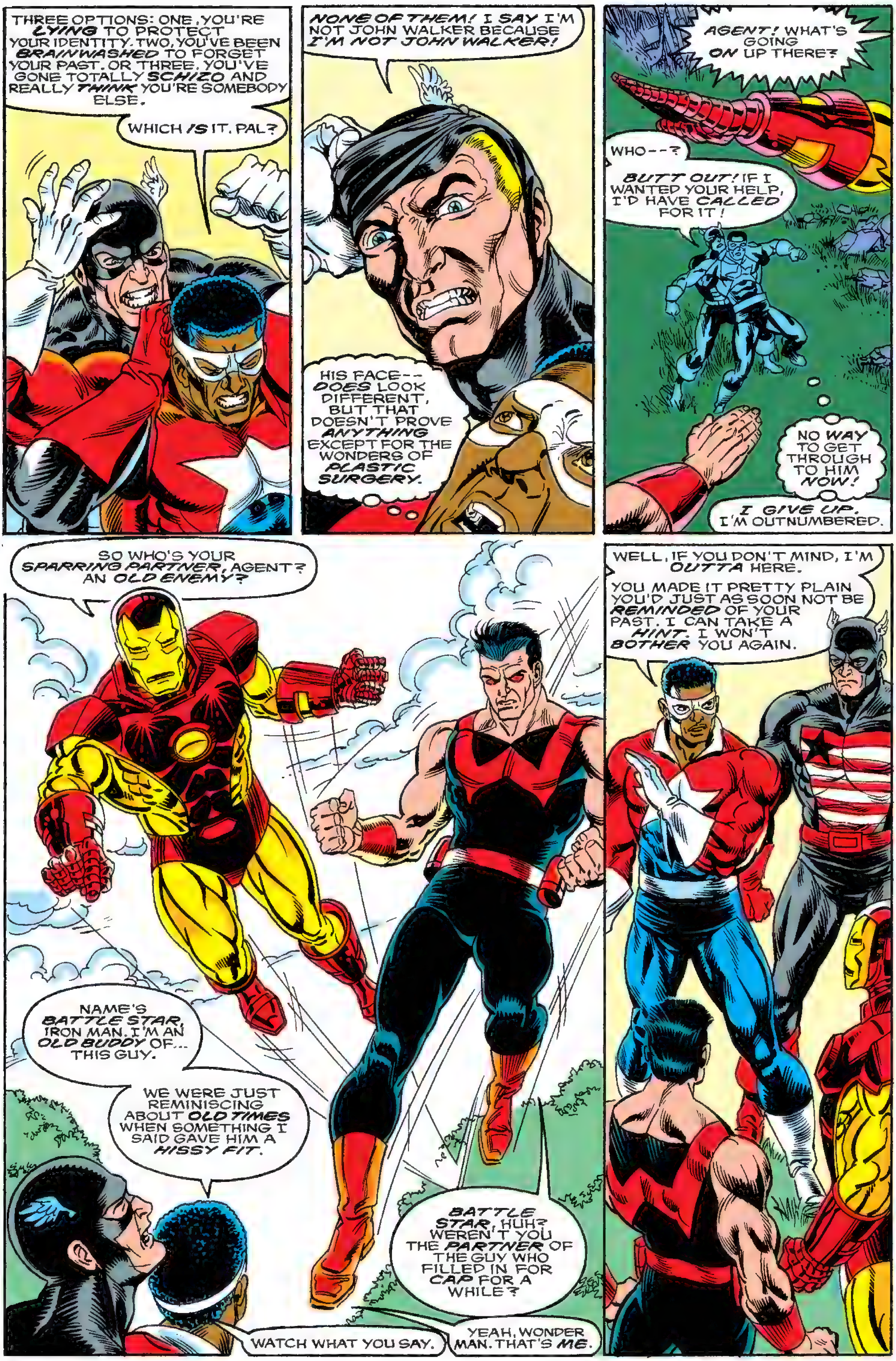

ABOVE...
SURE YOU'RE AN AVENGER, SPY-LADY--AND I'M PRINCESS DI!
NOW GET YOUR GLASNOST OFF MY RIDE!
NOT UNTIL YOU TELL ME WHAT YOU DID WITH THE CAPTAIN!
OOOF!
I'M SO BUSY HOLDING ON AND TRYING TO BLOCK HER BLOWS, I DON'T HAVE TIME TO GO FOR ONE OF MY TRICK DIAMONDS...
I'VE GOT A TEAR GAS-FILLED ONE ON MY LEFT HIP, IF I JUST HAD A HAND FREE TO GO FOR IT!
WHOA-WOAH! WE'RE BEGINNING TO LOSE ALTITUDE--FAST! WE'RE GOING TO--!
WIDOW! CHILL OUT A SEC AND HELP ME STEER THIS THING! WE'RE HEADING STRAIGHT TOWARDS THE HUDSON--!
WHAT MUST WE DO?
I--I DON'T KNO--
SPLOOTCH


BELOW...
I KNOW HE'S HERE. HE KNOWS I'M HERE.
I'M MOVING ABOUT. HE'S HOLDING STILL.
I'M CAPTAIN AMERICA. HE'S--
--IN BIG-- EH?
SVIISH
BLINDED-- LIGHT AIMED RIGHT AT MY EYES--!
CONTINUED IN TWO WEEKS!


Stan Lee PRESENTS:
BATTLESTAR
NOT SO VERY LONG AGO, THESE TWO MEN WERE FRIENDS. OR SO CLAIMS THE GENTLEMAN ON THE LEFT.
THE GENTLEMAN ON THE RIGHT BEGS TO DIFFER. HE CATEGORICALLY DENIES THAT HE EVER MET BATTLESTAR BEFORE.
PERHAPS HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT WILL NOT DETERMINE WHICH OF THESE MEN IS CORRECT, BUT THEY'RE BOTH TOO HEADSTRONG AND BODYSTRONG TO BACK DOWN NOW...!
ARE SO!
AM NOT!
FISTS OF TRUTH
BY GRUENWALD • BAGLEY • HUDSON • CHIANG • YOMTOV


PRESSING AGAINST ME WITH ALL HIS *MIGHT*... IF I WERE TO SUDDENLY GO SLACK, *SIDESTEP*--!
WHOAAAAAA--!
CRAACK
CUTE, BOZO. *REAL* CUTE.
WHAT SAY WE SETTLE THIS *WITHOUT* OUR TIN PLATES.
FINE BY *ME*, *JOHNNY*.
DON'T *CALL* ME THAT! MY NAME ISN'T JOHNNY, IT'S *USAGENT*, YOU HEAR?
THOOG
I'LL *LET* HIM SLAM ME AROUND A BIT. I WANT TO SEE IF HE'LL *PULL HIS PUNCHES* OUT OF DEFERENCE FOR OUR PAST, OR IF HE GOES *ALL OUT*!
BTAM
I AM *NOT* YOUR FRIEND!
I WAS *NEVER* CAPTAIN AMERICA'S REPLACEMENT!
AND MY PARENTS ARE *NOT DEAD*, BLAST YOU!
OOLKK!


HAD ENOUGH OF THE *PUNCHING BAG* ROUTINE. HE'S NOT PULLING THEM EVEN A *BIT*.
TELL ME SOMETHING, JOHNNY. I CAN ALMOST FIGURE OUT WHY YOU HAVEN'T BEEN *IN TOUCH* SINCE YOU TOOK ON THIS *USAGENT* GIG.
YOU MAY HAVE BEEN AFRAID THAT IF PEOPLE SAW US *TOGETHER*, THEY MIGHT ASSOCIATE US WITH THE *REPLACEMENT CAP* AND *BUCKY* AND SUSPECT YOU WEREN'T *REALLY DEAD*.
WHAT I *DON'T* GET, THOUGH, IS WHY YOU'RE STILL PRETENDING NOT TO *KNOW* ME WHEN IT'S JUST THE *TWO OF US* HERE, FAR FROM THE *PUBLIC EYE*!
WHAT *HAPPENED* TO YOU, JOHNNY? FRIENDSHIP MEAN THAT *LITTLE* TO YOU?
OR DID THEY *BRAINWASH* YOU BEFORE YOU WERE SENT UNDERCOV-- *URGH!?*
BTHAAK
STOP BLABBERING!!!
ALL YOUR CRAZY *ACCUSATIONS* AND *LOOSE TALK* JUST PROVE ONE THING--
--YOU'VE GOT *ROCKS* IN YOUR HEAD!
AND NOW-- -NNGHH!- I'M GONNA GIVE YOU--
--ROCKS *ON* YOUR HEAD!
BTRUUK
AEHGH!


THREE OPTIONS: ONE, YOU'RE LYING TO PROTECT YOUR IDENTITY. TWO, YOU'VE BEEN BRAINWASHED TO FORGET YOUR PAST. OR THREE, YOU'VE GONE TOTALLY SCHIZO AND REALLY THINK YOU'RE SOMEBODY ELSE.
WHICH IS IT, PAL?
NONE OF THEM! I SAY I'M NOT JOHN WALKER BECAUSE I'M NOT JOHN WALKER!
HIS FACE-- DOES LOOK DIFFERENT, BUT THAT DOESN'T PROVE ANYTHING EXCEPT FOR THE WONDERS OF PLASTIC SURGERY.
AGENT! WHAT'S GOING ON UP THERE?
WHO--?
BUTT OUT! IF I WANTED YOUR HELP, I'D HAVE CALLED FOR IT!
NO WAY TO GET THROUGH TO HIM NOW!
I GIVE UP. I'M OUTNUMBERED.
SO WHO'S YOUR SPARRING PARTNER, AGENT? AN OLD ENEMY?
NAME'S BATTLE STAR, IRON MAN. I'M AN OLD BUDDY OF... THIS GUY.
WE WERE JUST REMINISCING ABOUT OLD TIMES WHEN SOMETHING I SAID GAVE HIM A HISSY FIT.
BATTLE STAR, HUH? WEREN'T YOU THE PARTNER OF THE GUY WHO FILLED IN FOR CAP FOR A WHILE?
WATCH WHAT YOU SAY.
YEAH, WONDER MAN. THAT'S ME.
WELL, IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'M OUTTA HERE.
YOU MADE IT PRETTY PLAIN YOU'D JUST AS SOON NOT BE REMINDED OF YOUR PAST. I CAN TAKE A HINT. I WON'T BOTHER YOU AGAIN.

YOU AVENGERS WOULD DO WELL TO *WATCH* THIS GUY. HE'S A WALKING *TIME BOMB*--
--AND SOMEONE'S GONNA HAVE A *MESS* ON THEIR HANDS WHEN HE *EXPLODES!*
SO THE MYSTERIOUS *USAGENT* HAS A *FRIEND*. WHAT A SURPRISE.
SHUT UP, IRON MAN. JUST SHUT UP.
SOON, ON THE PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY...
AFTER ALL WE WENT *THROUGH* TOGETHER, TO HAVE IT COME TO *THIS!* MAN, THAT *FROSTS* ME!
SO *NOW* WHAT? GO BACK TO *CHI-TOWN*, I GUESS.
LET ME TOUCH BASE WITH MY *BROTHER*.
LEON? LEMAR. HOW GOES?
GLAD YOU *CALLED*, LEMAR! YOU JUST GOT A CALL FROM AN *ETHAN THURM* IN L.A.... SAYS HE WANTS TO SEE YOU ON A MATTER OF *NATIONAL IMPORTANCE!*
HE LEFT A NUMBER.
NATIONAL IMPORTANCE I'LL JUST *BET*. WELL, SINCE I'VE GOT NOTHING *BETTER* TO DO.
SOON, AT A CHEAP MOTEL...
I'M *WARNING* YOU, THURM. IF THIS IS A TRICK TO GET ME TO SIGN YOU UP AS MY *PERSONAL MANAGER* AGAIN, I'LL--
NO! NO IT'S *NOT*, I SWEAR! MY *LIFE* IS IN DANGER! SOMEONE'S OUT TO *GET ME!*
IS THAT *ALL?* I THOUGHT YOU SAID THIS WAS A *NATIONAL EMERGENCY!*
WELL, I'M AN *AMERICAN ORIGINAL*, SO IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO *ME*, IT'LL BE A--
"YOU LITTLE WEASEL. YOU *TRICKED* ME."
"NO, REALLY! I'M IN *DANGER*, LEMAR. I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF THE GUYS OUT TO GET ME WERE RIGHT OUTSIDE THIS *DOOR!*"
NEXT: POWER TOOLS!

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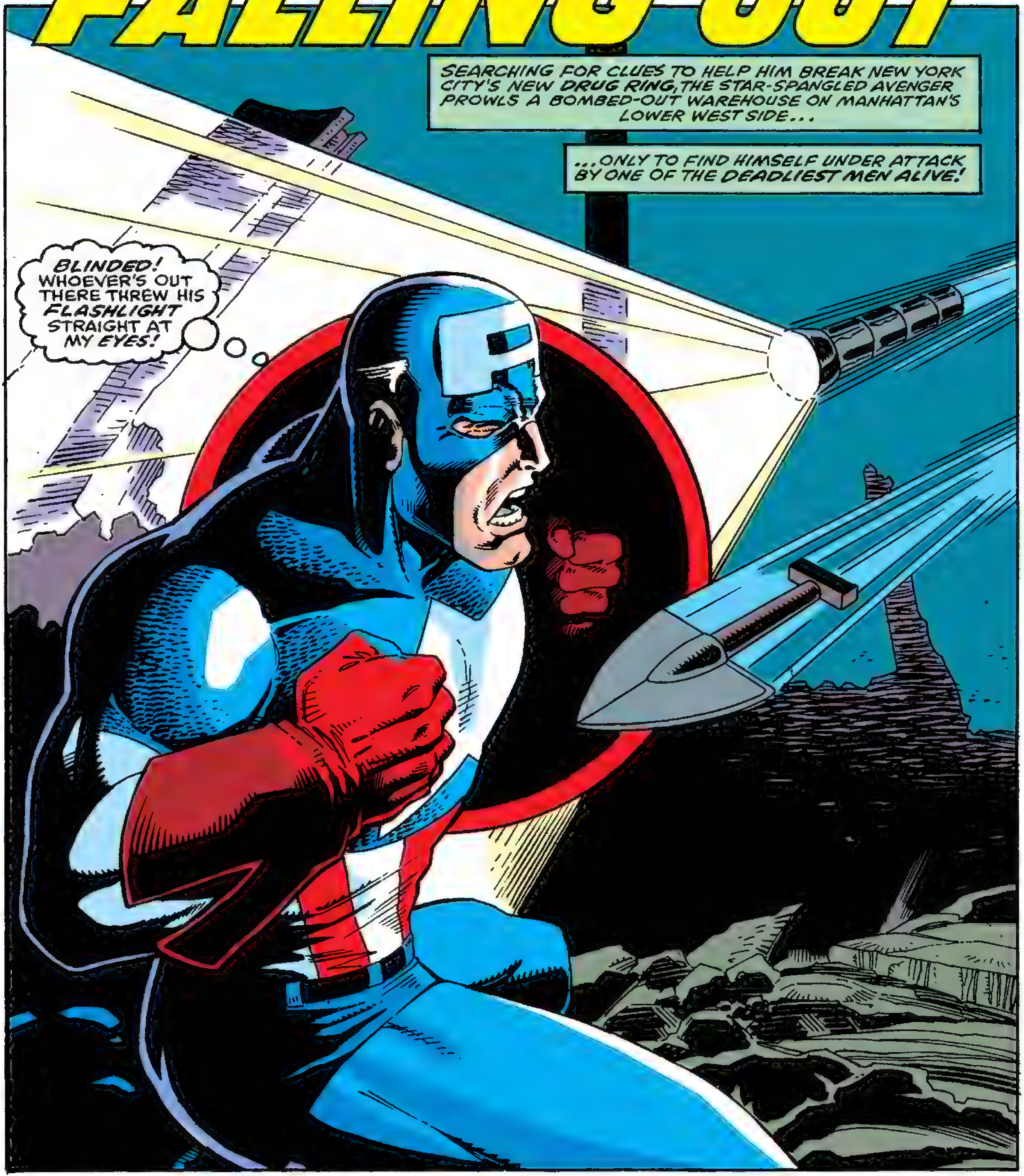
RON LIM 90 + DAN BULANADI

STEVE ROGERS . . . BORN IN THE U.S.A. RAISED TO CHERISH THE IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY, ENDOWED WITH A SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE, AND DRIVEN TO BE THE MOST CAPABLE COMBATANT IN THE WORLD. NOW AS BOTH LONE CRUSADER AND LEADER OF THE RENOWNED AVENGERS, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM! STAN LEE PRESENTS . . . CAPTAIN AMERICA!

FALLING OUT


SEARCHING FOR CLUES TO HELP HIM BREAK NEW YORK CITY'S NEW DRUG RING, THE STAR-SPANGLED AVENGER PROWLS A BOMBED-OUT WAREHOUSE ON MANHATTAN'S LOWER WEST SIDE...
...ONLY TO FIND HIMSELF UNDER ATTACK BY ONE OF THE DEADLIEST MEN ALIVE!
BLINDED! WHOEVER'S OUT THERE THREW HIS FLASHLIGHT STRAIGHT AT MY EYES!

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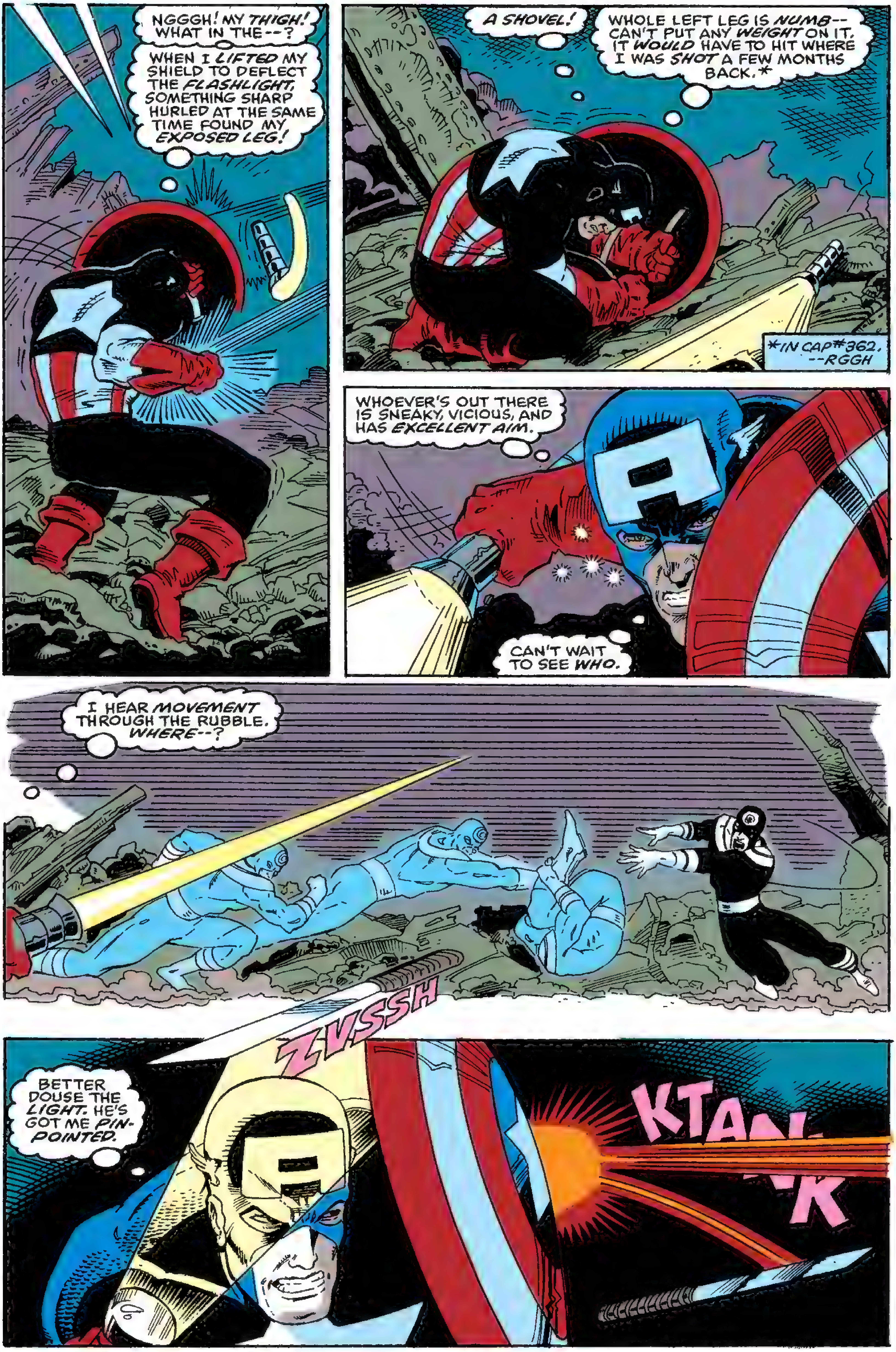
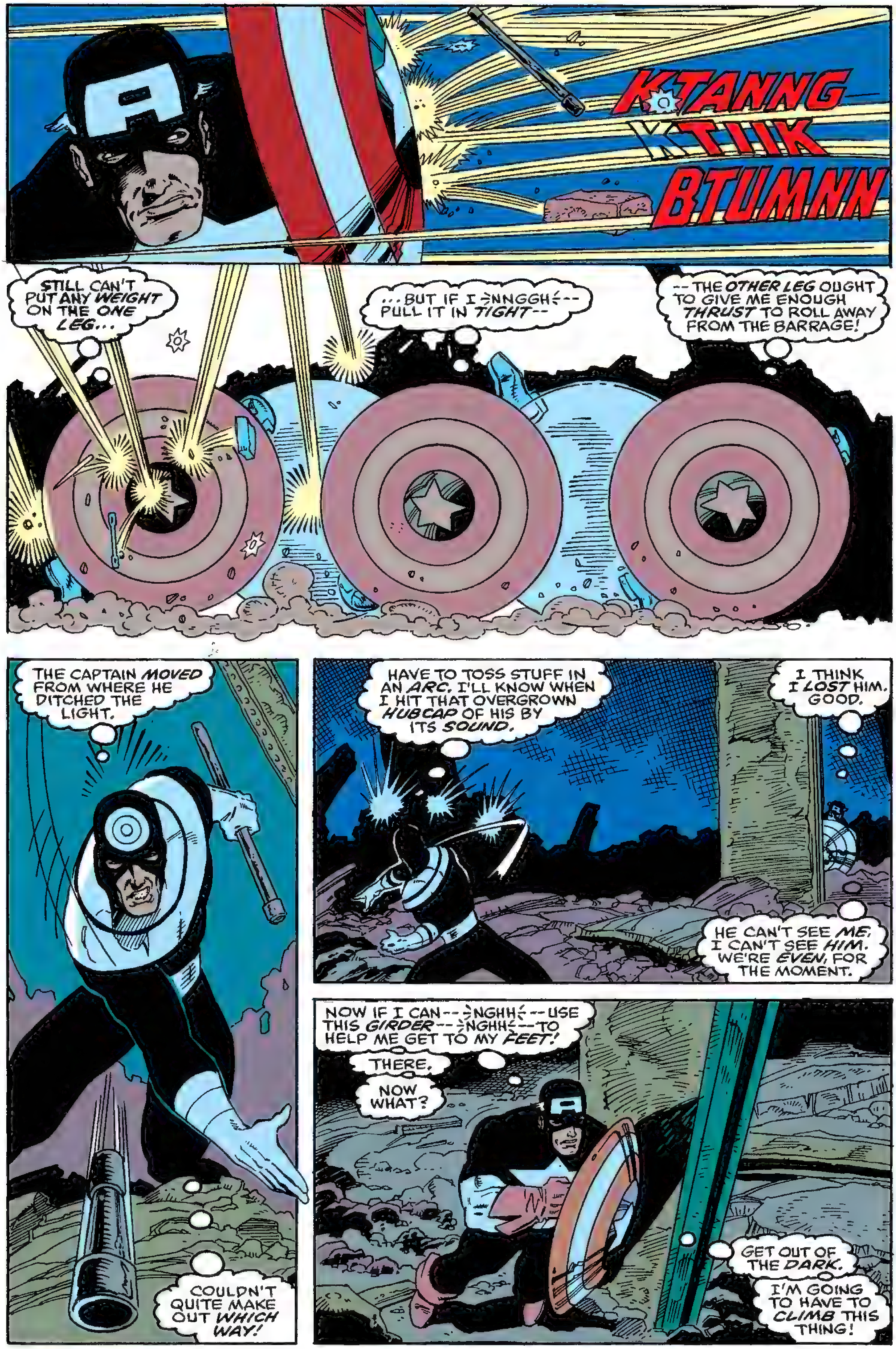
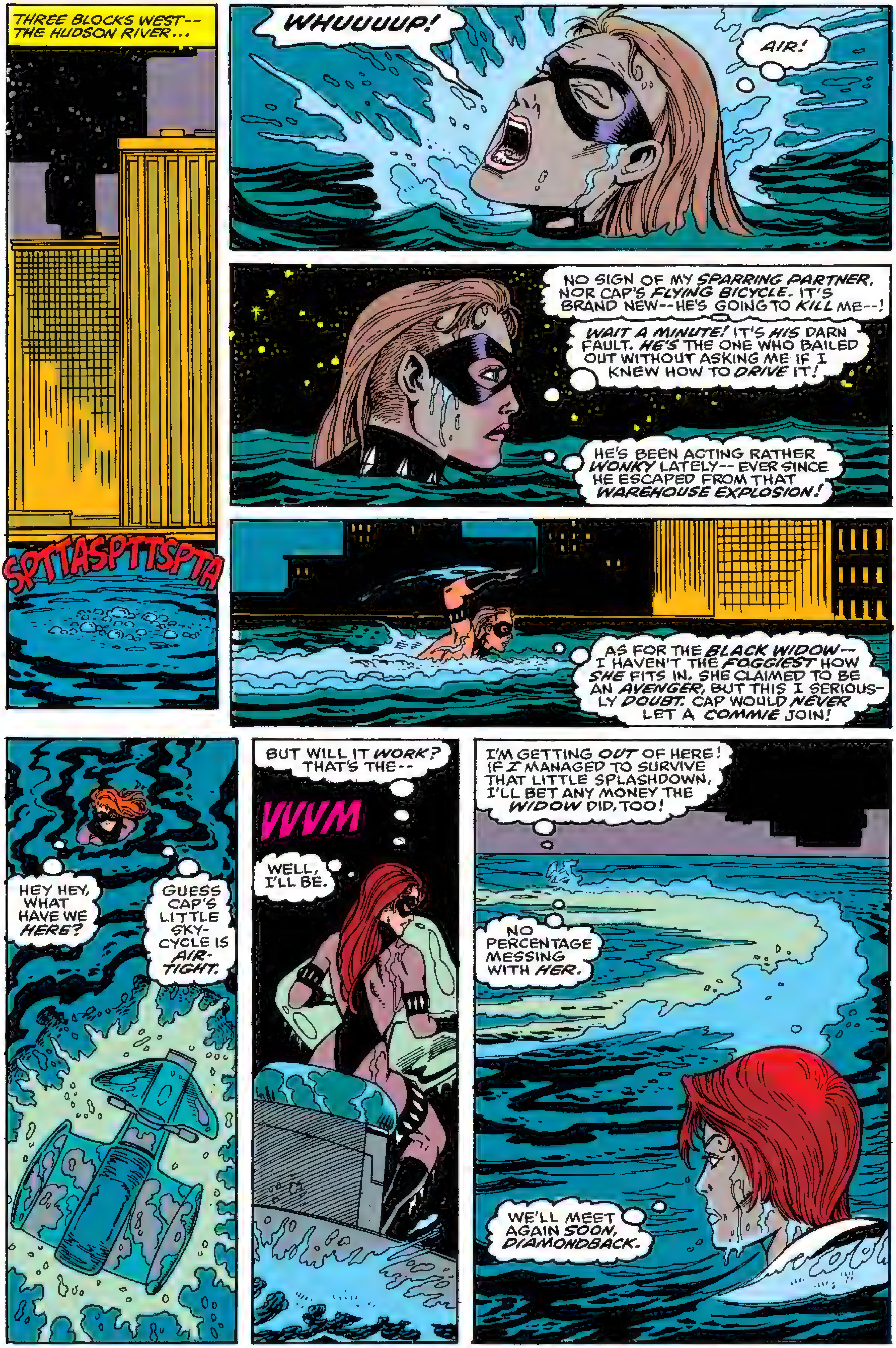
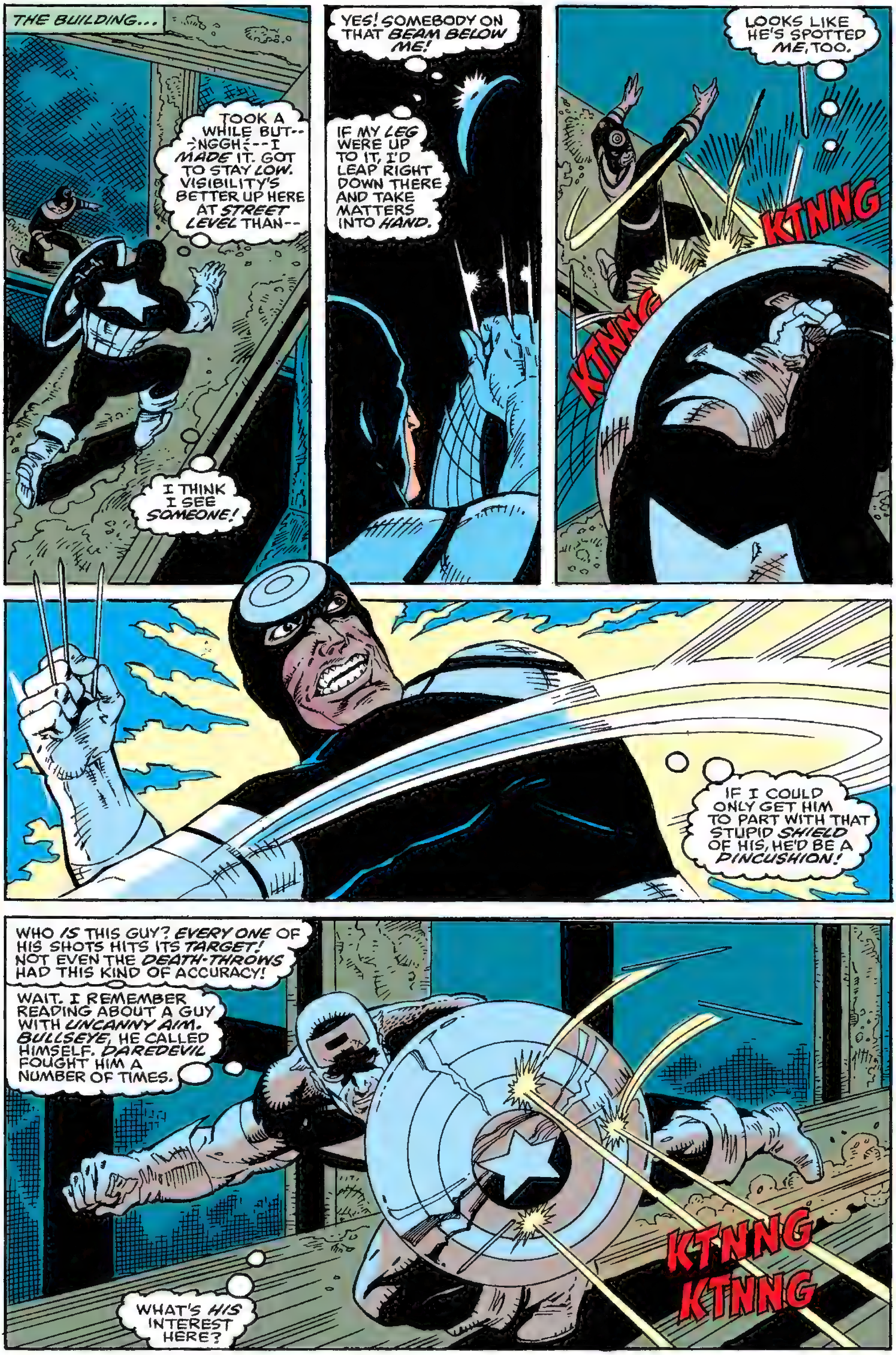
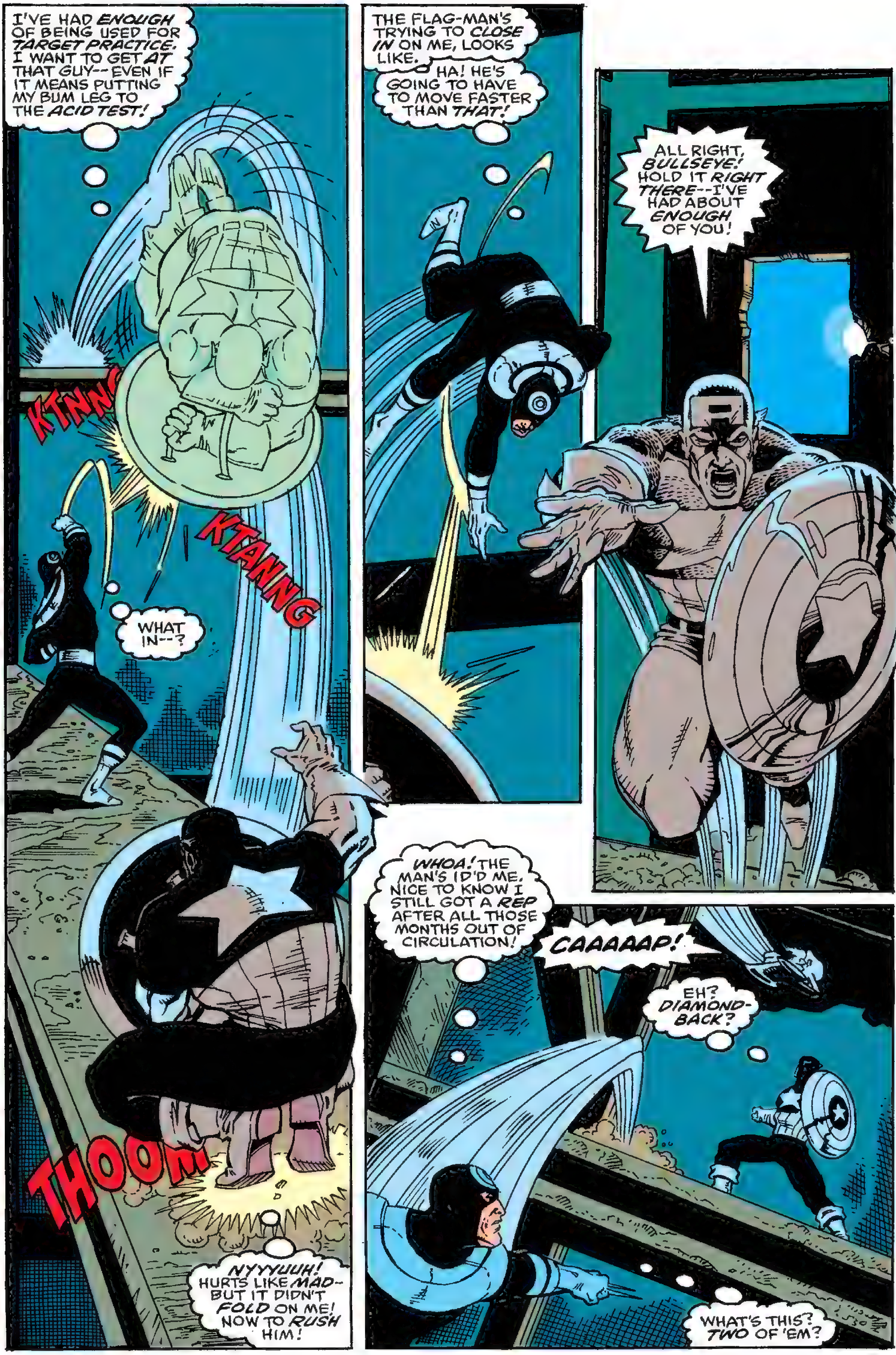
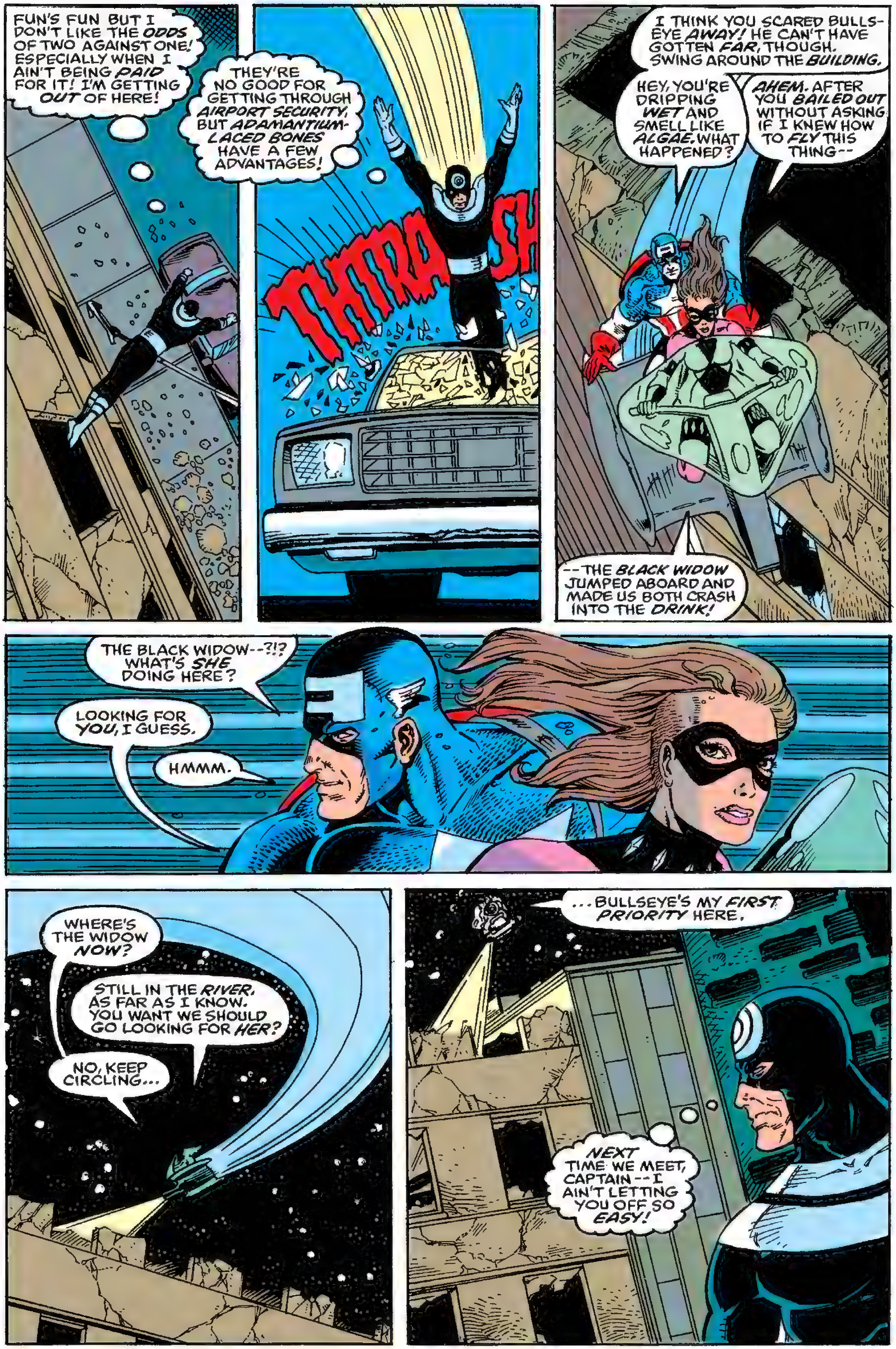

NGGGH! MY *THIGH!* WHAT IN THE--?
WHEN I *LIFTED* MY SHIELD TO DEFLECT THE *FLASHLIGHT,* SOMETHING SHARP HURLED AT THE SAME TIME FOUND MY *EXPOSED LEG!*
A SHOVEL!
WHOLE LEFT LEG IS *NUMB*-- CAN'T PUT ANY *WEIGHT* ON IT. IT *WOULD* HAVE TO HIT WHERE I WAS *SHOT* A FEW MONTHS BACK.*
*IN CAP#362. --RGGH
WHOEVER'S OUT THERE IS SNEAKY, VICIOUS, AND HAS *EXCELLENT AIM.*
CAN'T WAIT TO SEE *WHO.*
I HEAR *MOVEMENT* THROUGH THE RUBBLE. *WHERE*--?
ZVSSH
BETTER DOUSE THE *LIGHT.* HE'S GOT ME *PIN-POINTED.*
KTANNK

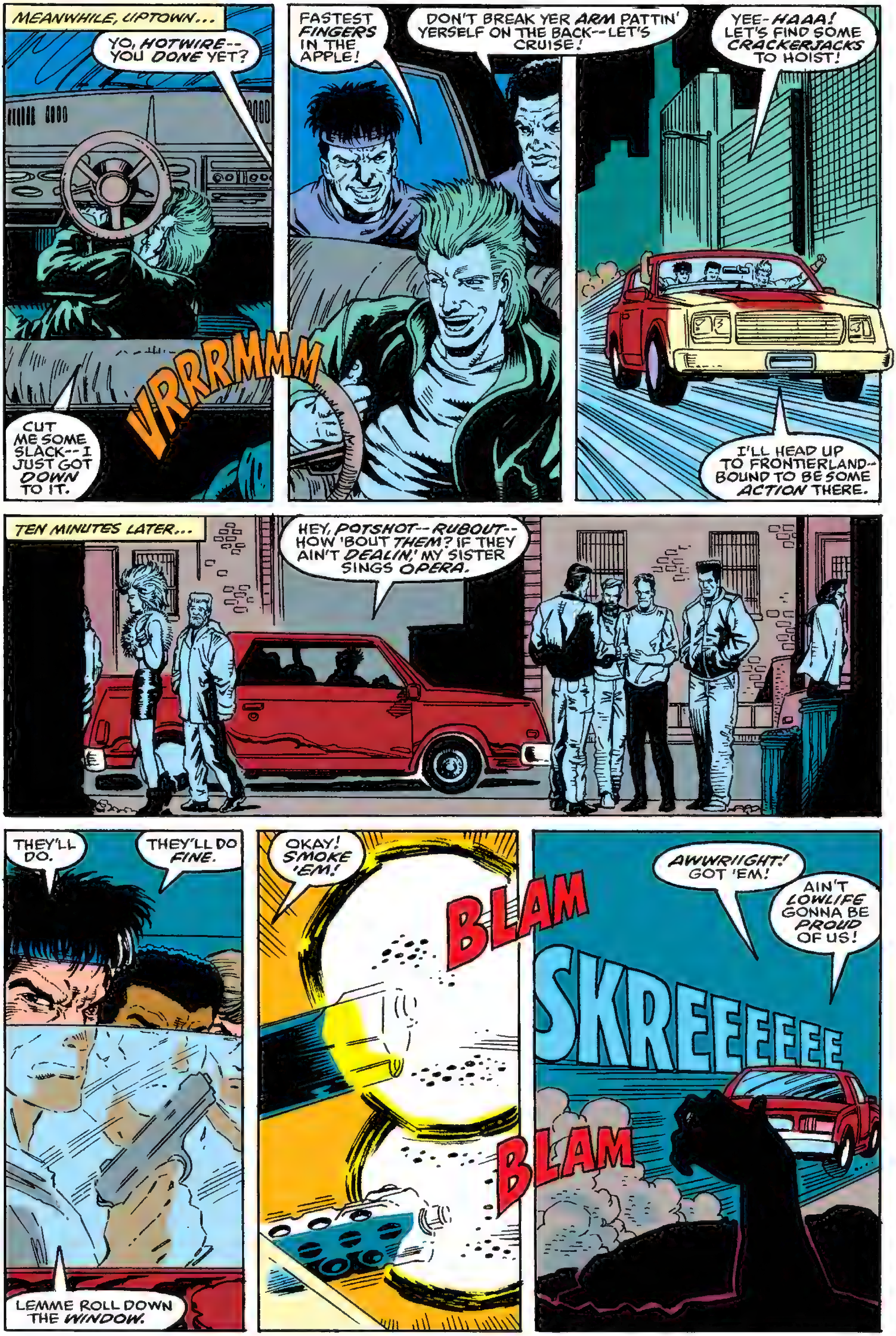

KTANNG
TIIK
BTUMNN
STILL CAN'T PUT ANY *WEIGHT* ON THE *ONE LEG*...
...BUT IF I ⋛NNGGH⋚-- PULL IT IN *TIGHT*--
--THE *OTHER LEG* OUGHT TO GIVE ME ENOUGH *THRUST* TO ROLL AWAY FROM THE BARRAGE!
THE CAPTAIN *MOVED* FROM WHERE HE DITCHED THE LIGHT.
COULDN'T QUITE MAKE OUT *WHICH WAY!*
HAVE TO TOSS STUFF IN AN *ARC*. I'LL KNOW WHEN I HIT THAT OVERGROWN *HUBCAP* OF HIS BY ITS *SOUND*.
I THINK I *LOST* HIM. GOOD.
HE CAN'T SEE *ME*. I CAN'T SEE *HIM*. WE'RE *EVEN*, FOR THE MOMENT.
NOW IF I CAN-- ⋛NGHH⋚ --USE THIS *GIRDER*-- ⋛NGHH⋚ --TO HELP ME GET TO MY *FEET!*
THERE.
NOW WHAT?
GET OUT OF THE *DARK*.
I'M GOING TO HAVE TO *CLIMB* THIS THING!

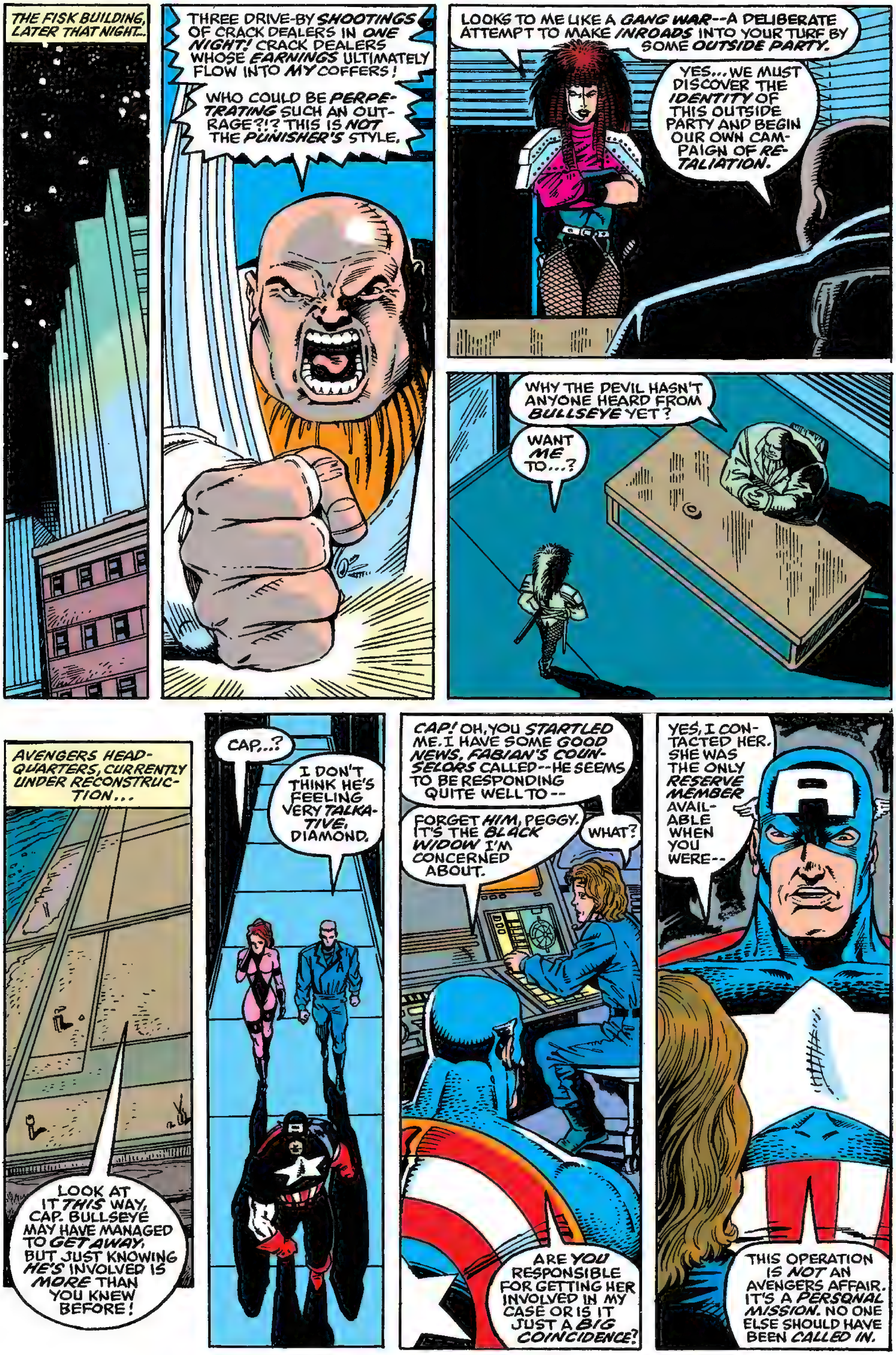

THREE BLOCKS WEST-- THE HUDSON RIVER...
SPTTASPTTSPTA
WHUUUUUP!
AIR!
NO SIGN OF MY SPARRING PARTNER, NOR CAP'S FLYING BICYCLE. IT'S BRAND NEW--HE'S GOING TO KILL ME--!
WAIT A MINUTE! IT'S HIS DARN FAULT. HE'S THE ONE WHO BAILED OUT WITHOUT ASKING ME IF I KNEW HOW TO DRIVE IT!
HE'S BEEN ACTING RATHER WONKY LATELY-- EVER SINCE HE ESCAPED FROM THAT WAREHOUSE EXPLOSION!
AS FOR THE BLACK WIDOW-- I HAVEN'T THE FOGGIEST HOW SHE FITS IN. SHE CLAIMED TO BE AN AVENGER, BUT THIS I SERIOUSLY DOUBT. CAP WOULD NEVER LET A COMMIE JOIN!
HEY HEY, WHAT HAVE WE HERE?
GUESS CAP'S LITTLE SKY-CYCLE IS AIR-TIGHT.
BUT WILL IT WORK? THAT'S THE--
VVVM
WELL, I'LL BE.
I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE! IF I MANAGED TO SURVIVE THAT LITTLE SPLASHDOWN, I'LL BET ANY MONEY THE WIDOW DID, TOO!
NO PERCENTAGE MESSING WITH HER.
WE'LL MEET AGAIN SOON, DIAMONDBACK.

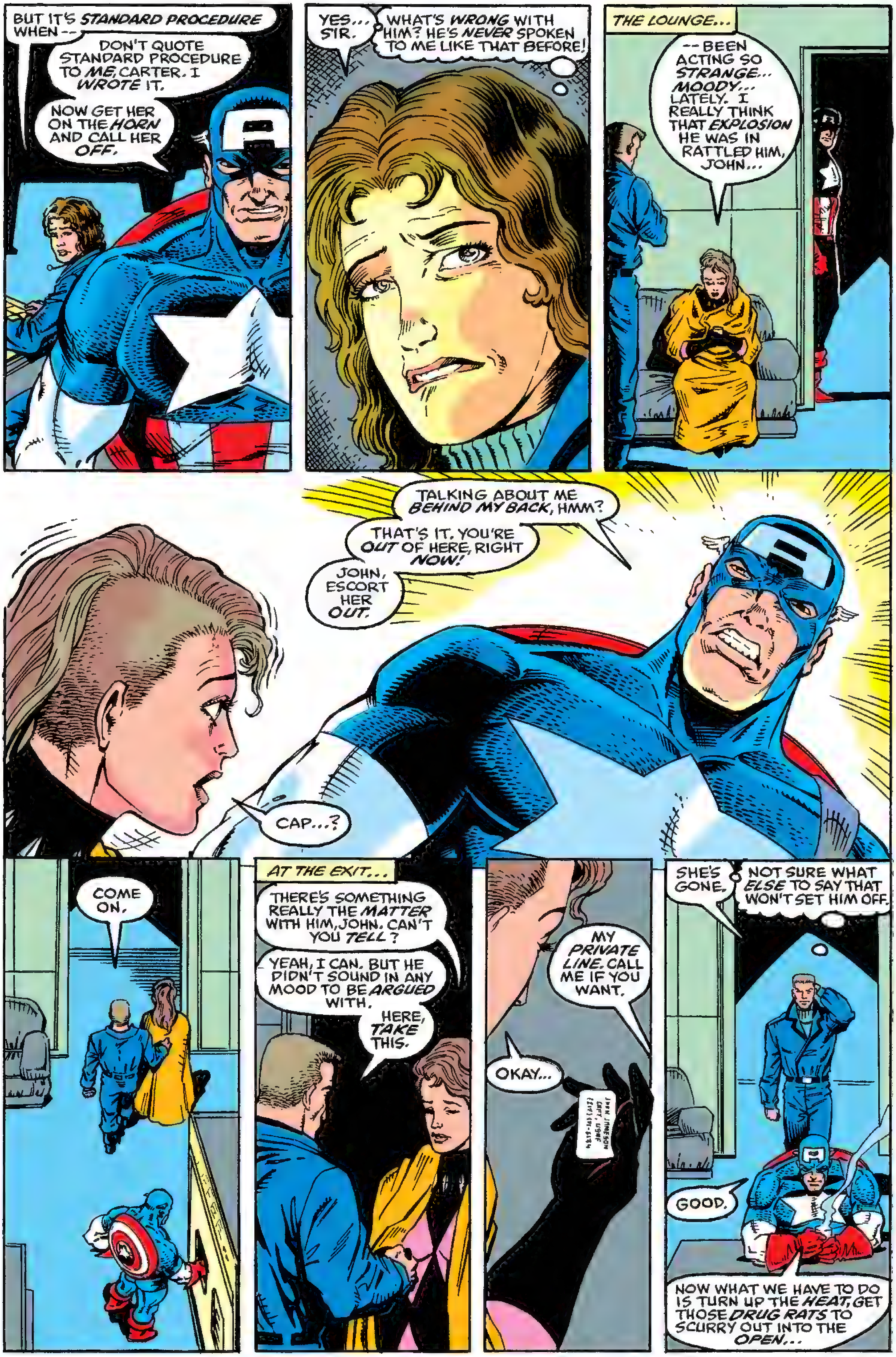

THE BUILDING...
TOOK A WHILE BUT-- -NGGH!- --I MADE IT. GOT TO STAY LOW. VISIBILITY'S BETTER UP HERE AT STREET LEVEL THAN--
I THINK I SEE SOMEONE!
YES! SOMEBODY ON THAT BEAM BELOW ME!
IF MY LEG WERE UP TO IT, I'D LEAP RIGHT DOWN THERE AND TAKE MATTERS INTO HAND.
LOOKS LIKE HE'S SPOTTED ME, TOO.
KTNNG
KTNNG
IF I COULD ONLY GET HIM TO PART WITH THAT STUPID SHIELD OF HIS, HE'D BE A PINCUSHION!
WHO IS THIS GUY? EVERY ONE OF HIS SHOTS HITS ITS TARGET! NOT EVEN THE DEATH-THROWS HAD THIS KIND OF ACCURACY!
WAIT. I REMEMBER READING ABOUT A GUY WITH UNCANNY AIM. BULLSEYE, HE CALLED HIMSELF. DAREDEVIL FOUGHT HIM A NUMBER OF TIMES.
KTNNG
KTNNG
WHAT'S HIS INTEREST HERE?


I'VE HAD *ENOUGH* OF BEING USED FOR *TARGET PRACTICE.* I WANT TO GET *AT* THAT GUY-- EVEN IF IT MEANS PUTTING MY BUM LEG TO THE *ACID TEST!*
KTNNG
KTANNG
WHAT IN--?
THOOM
NYYYUUH! HURTS LIKE *MAD*-- BUT IT DIDN'T *FOLD* ON ME! NOW TO *RUSH* HIM!
THE FLAG-MAN'S TRYING TO *CLOSE IN* ON ME, LOOKS LIKE.
HA! HE'S GOING TO HAVE TO MOVE FASTER THAN *THAT!*
ALL RIGHT, *BULLSEYE!* HOLD IT *RIGHT THERE*--I'VE HAD ABOUT *ENOUGH* OF YOU!
WHOA! THE MAN'S ID'D ME. NICE TO KNOW I STILL GOT A *REP* AFTER ALL THOSE MONTHS OUT OF CIRCULATION!
CAAAAAP!
EH? *DIAMOND-BACK?*
WHAT'S THIS? *TWO* OF 'EM?

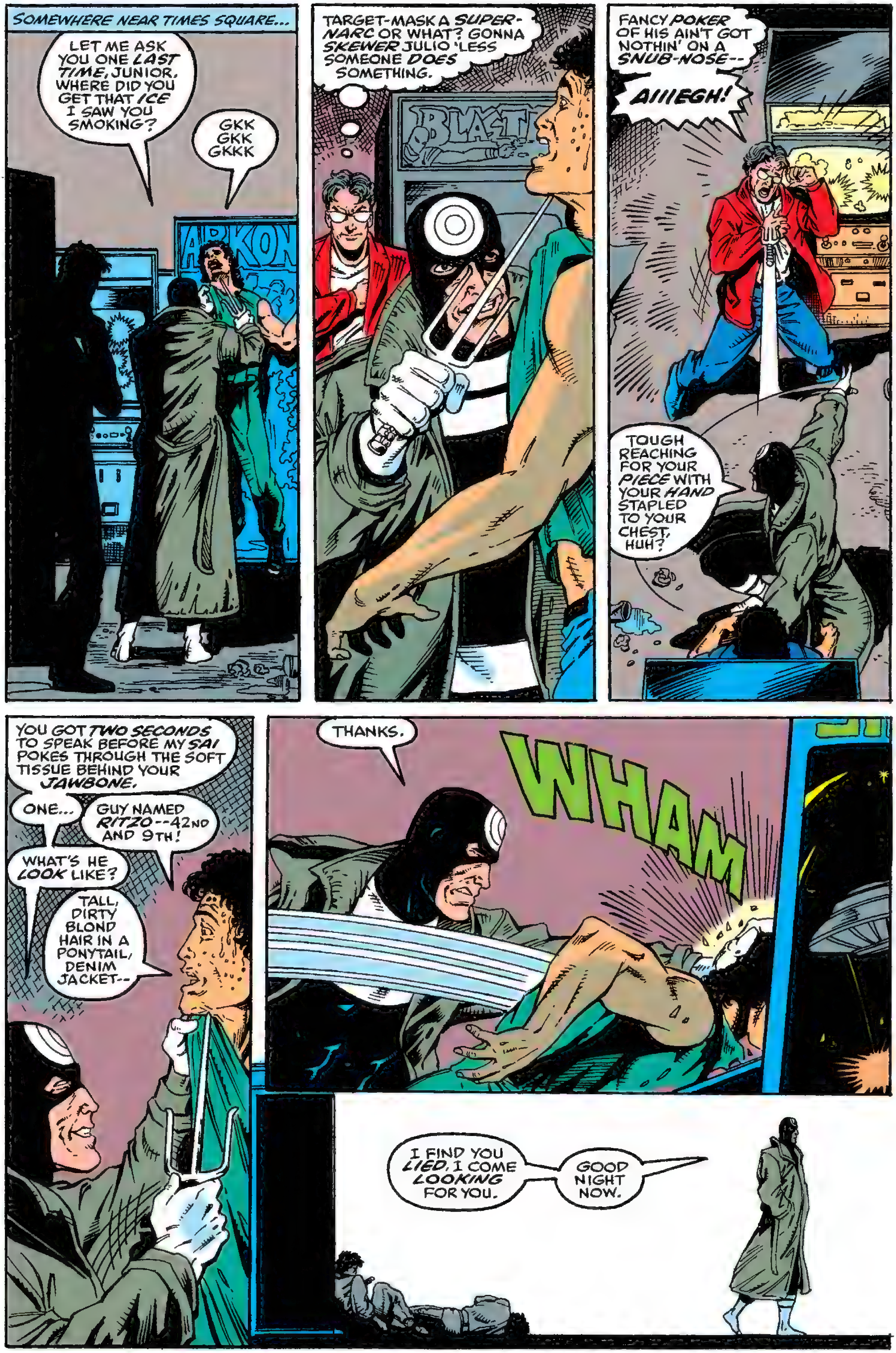

FUN'S FUN BUT I DON'T LIKE THE *ODDS* OF TWO AGAINST ONE! ESPECIALLY WHEN I AIN'T BEING *PAID* FOR IT! I'M GETTING *OUT* OF HERE!
THEY'RE NO GOOD FOR GETTING THROUGH *AIRPORT SECURITY*, BUT *ADAMANTIUM-LACED BONES* HAVE A FEW ADVANTAGES!
THTRASH
I THINK YOU SCARED BULLSEYE *AWAY!* HE CAN'T HAVE GOTTEN *FAR*, THOUGH. SWING AROUND THE *BUILDING*.
HEY, YOU'RE DRIPPING *WET* AND SMELL LIKE *ALGAE*. WHAT HAPPENED?
AHEM. AFTER YOU *BAILED OUT* WITHOUT ASKING IF I KNEW HOW TO *FLY* THIS THING--
--THE *BLACK WIDOW* JUMPED ABOARD AND MADE US BOTH CRASH INTO THE *DRINK!*
THE BLACK WIDOW--?!? WHAT'S *SHE* DOING HERE?
LOOKING FOR *YOU*, I GUESS.
HMMM.
WHERE'S THE WIDOW *NOW?*
STILL IN THE *RIVER*, AS FAR AS I KNOW. YOU WANT WE SHOULD GO LOOKING FOR *HER?*
NO, KEEP CIRCLING...
...BULLSEYE'S MY *FIRST PRIORITY* HERE.
NEXT TIME WE MEET, CAPTAIN -- I AIN'T LETTING YOU OFF SO *EASY!*

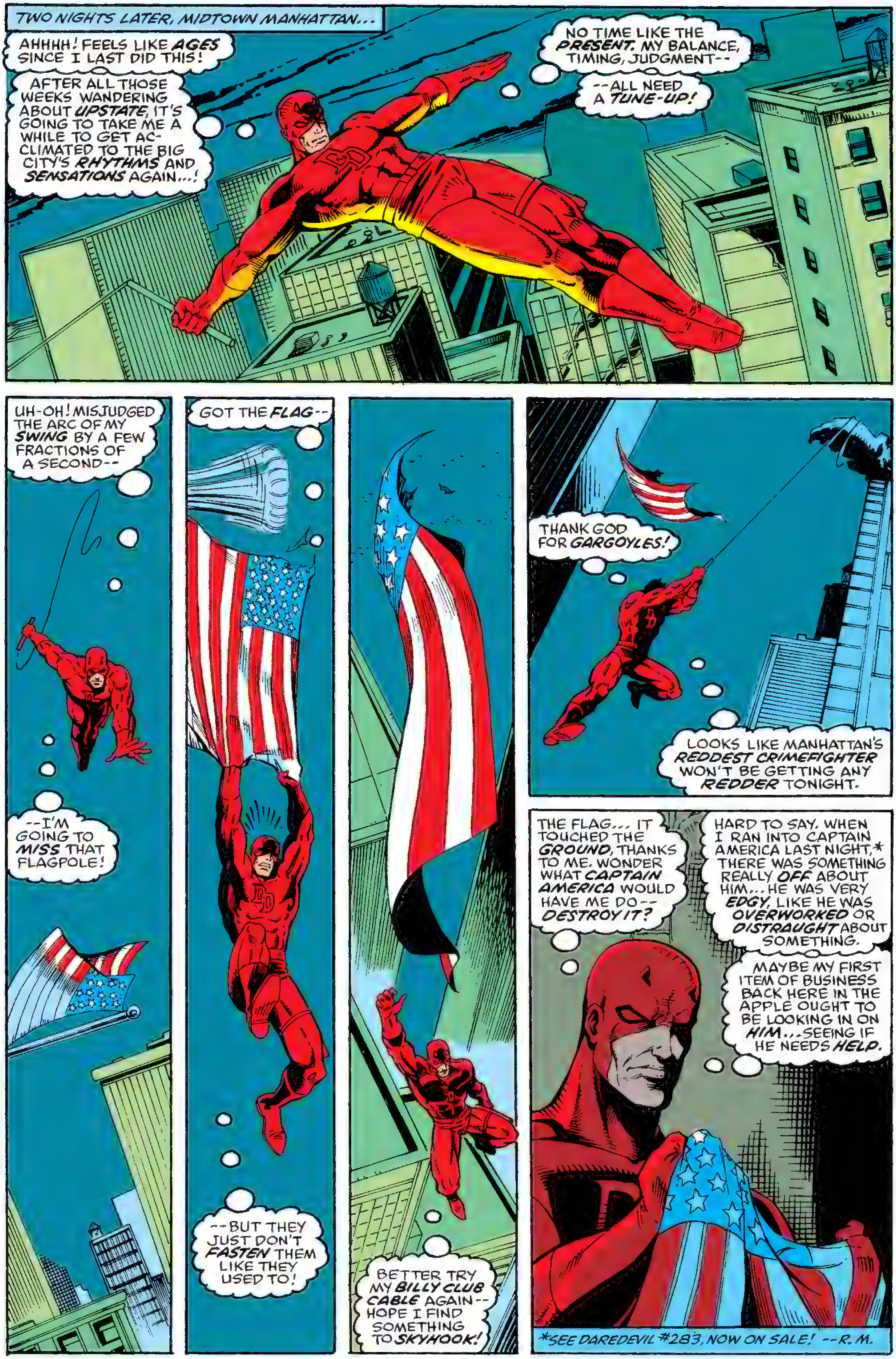

MEANWHILE, UPTOWN...
YO, HOTWIRE-- YOU DONE YET?
CUT ME SOME SLACK-- I JUST GOT DOWN TO IT.
VRRRMMM
FASTEST FINGERS IN THE APPLE!
DON'T BREAK YER ARM PATTIN' YERSELF ON THE BACK-- LET'S CRUISE!
YEE-HAAA! LET'S FIND SOME CRACKERJACKS TO HOIST!
I'LL HEAD UP TO FRONTIERLAND-- BOUND TO BE SOME ACTION THERE.
TEN MINUTES LATER...
HEY, POTSHOT-- RUBOUT-- HOW 'BOUT THEM? IF THEY AIN'T DEALIN,' MY SISTER SINGS OPERA.
THEY'LL DO.
THEY'LL DO FINE.
LEMME ROLL DOWN THE WINDOW.
OKAY! SMOKE 'EM!
BLAM
BLAM
AWWRIIGHT! GOT 'EM!
AIN'T LOWLIFE GONNA BE PROUD OF US!
SKREEEEEEE

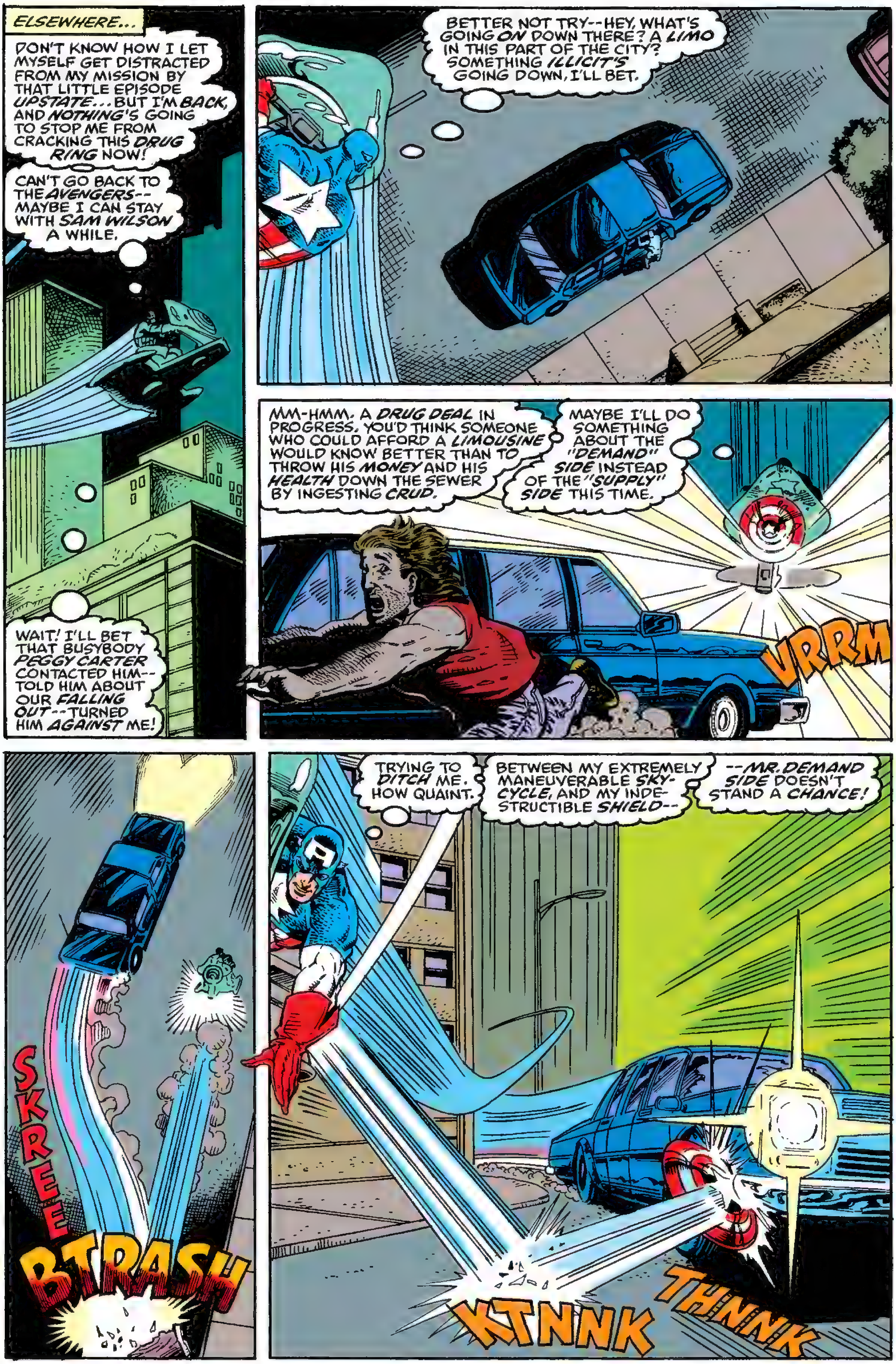

THE FISK BUILDING, LATER THAT NIGHT...
THREE DRIVE-BY SHOOTINGS OF CRACK DEALERS IN ONE NIGHT! CRACK DEALERS WHOSE EARNINGS ULTIMATELY FLOW INTO MY COFFERS!
WHO COULD BE PERPETRATING SUCH AN OUTRAGE?!? THIS IS NOT THE PUNISHER'S STYLE.
LOOKS TO ME LIKE A GANG WAR--A DELIBERATE ATTEMPT TO MAKE INROADS INTO YOUR TURF BY SOME OUTSIDE PARTY.
YES... WE MUST DISCOVER THE IDENTITY OF THIS OUTSIDE PARTY AND BEGIN OUR OWN CAMPAIGN OF RETALIATION.
WHY THE DEVIL HASN'T ANYONE HEARD FROM BULLSEYE YET?
WANT ME TO...?
AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS, CURRENTLY UNDER RECONSTRUCTION...
LOOK AT IT THIS WAY, CAP. BULLSEYE MAY HAVE MANAGED TO GET AWAY, BUT JUST KNOWING HE'S INVOLVED IS MORE THAN YOU KNEW BEFORE!
CAP...?
I DON'T THINK HE'S FEELING VERY TALKATIVE, DIAMOND.
CAP! OH, YOU STARTLED ME. I HAVE SOME GOOD NEWS. FABIAN'S COUNSELORS CALLED--HE SEEMS TO BE RESPONDING QUITE WELL TO--
FORGET HIM, PEGGY. IT'S THE BLACK WIDOW I'M CONCERNED ABOUT.
WHAT?
ARE YOU RESPONSIBLE FOR GETTING HER INVOLVED IN MY CASE OR IS IT JUST A BIG COINCIDENCE?
YES, I CONTACTED HER. SHE WAS THE ONLY RESERVE MEMBER AVAILABLE WHEN YOU WERE--
THIS OPERATION IS NOT AN AVENGERS AFFAIR. IT'S A PERSONAL MISSION. NO ONE ELSE SHOULD HAVE BEEN CALLED IN.

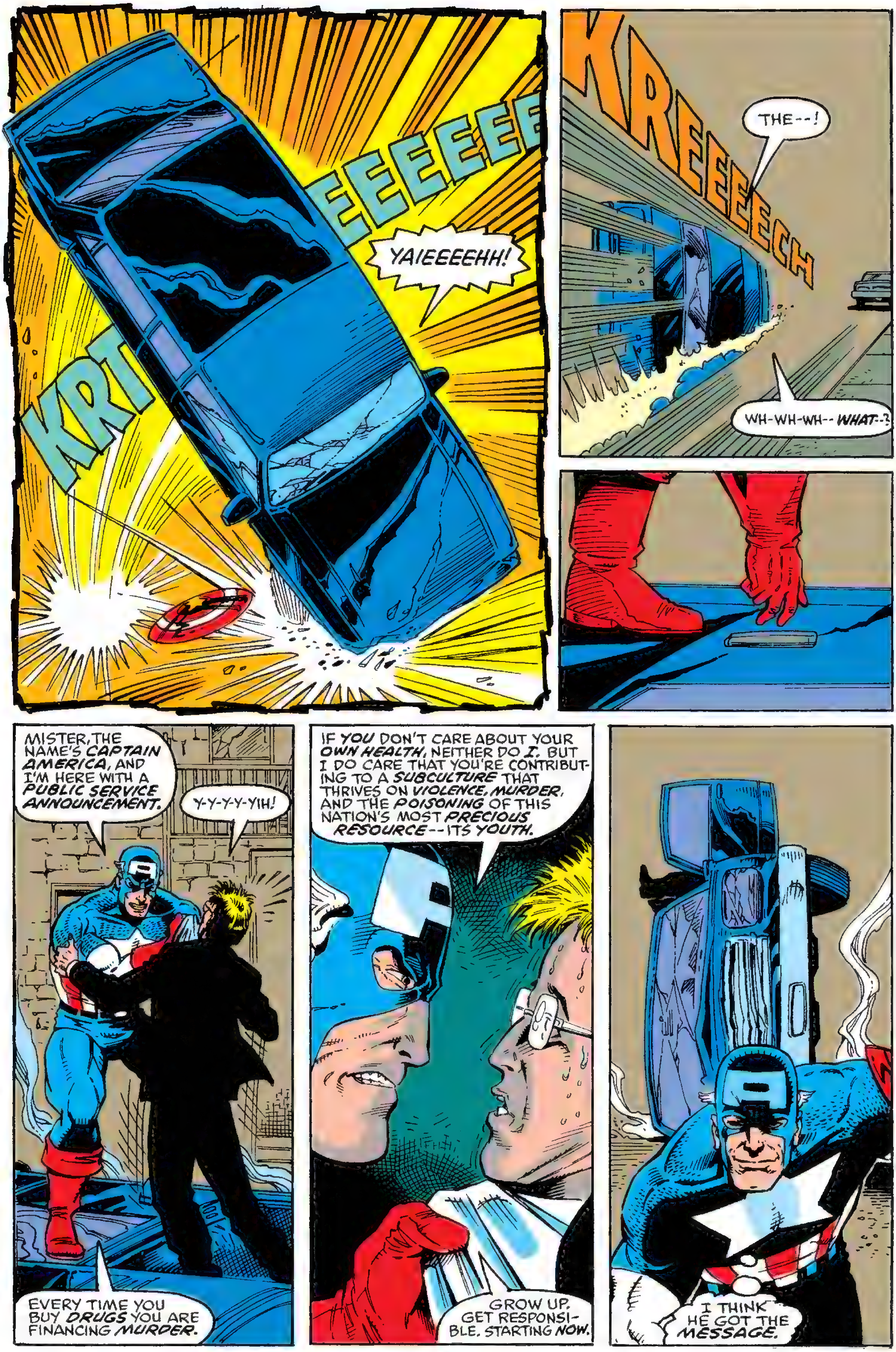

BUT IT'S STANDARD PROCEDURE WHEN --
DON'T QUOTE STANDARD PROCEDURE TO ME, CARTER. I WROTE IT.
NOW GET HER ON THE HORN AND CALL HER OFF.
YES... SIR.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM? HE'S NEVER SPOKEN TO ME LIKE THAT BEFORE!
THE LOUNGE...
-- BEEN ACTING SO STRANGE... MOODY... LATELY. I REALLY THINK THAT EXPLOSION HE WAS IN RATTLED HIM, JOHN...
TALKING ABOUT ME BEHIND MY BACK, HMM?
THAT'S IT. YOU'RE OUT OF HERE, RIGHT NOW!
JOHN, ESCORT HER OUT.
CAP...?
COME ON.
AT THE EXIT...
THERE'S SOMETHING REALLY THE MATTER WITH HIM, JOHN. CAN'T YOU TELL?
YEAH, I CAN. BUT HE DIDN'T SOUND IN ANY MOOD TO BE ARGUED WITH.
HERE, TAKE THIS.
MY PRIVATE LINE. CALL ME IF YOU WANT.
OKAY...
JOHN JAMESON
CAPT., USAF
SHE'S GONE.
NOT SURE WHAT ELSE TO SAY THAT WON'T SET HIM OFF.
GOOD.
NOW WHAT WE HAVE TO DO IS TURN UP THE HEAT, GET THOSE DRUG RATS TO SCURRY OUT INTO THE OPEN...

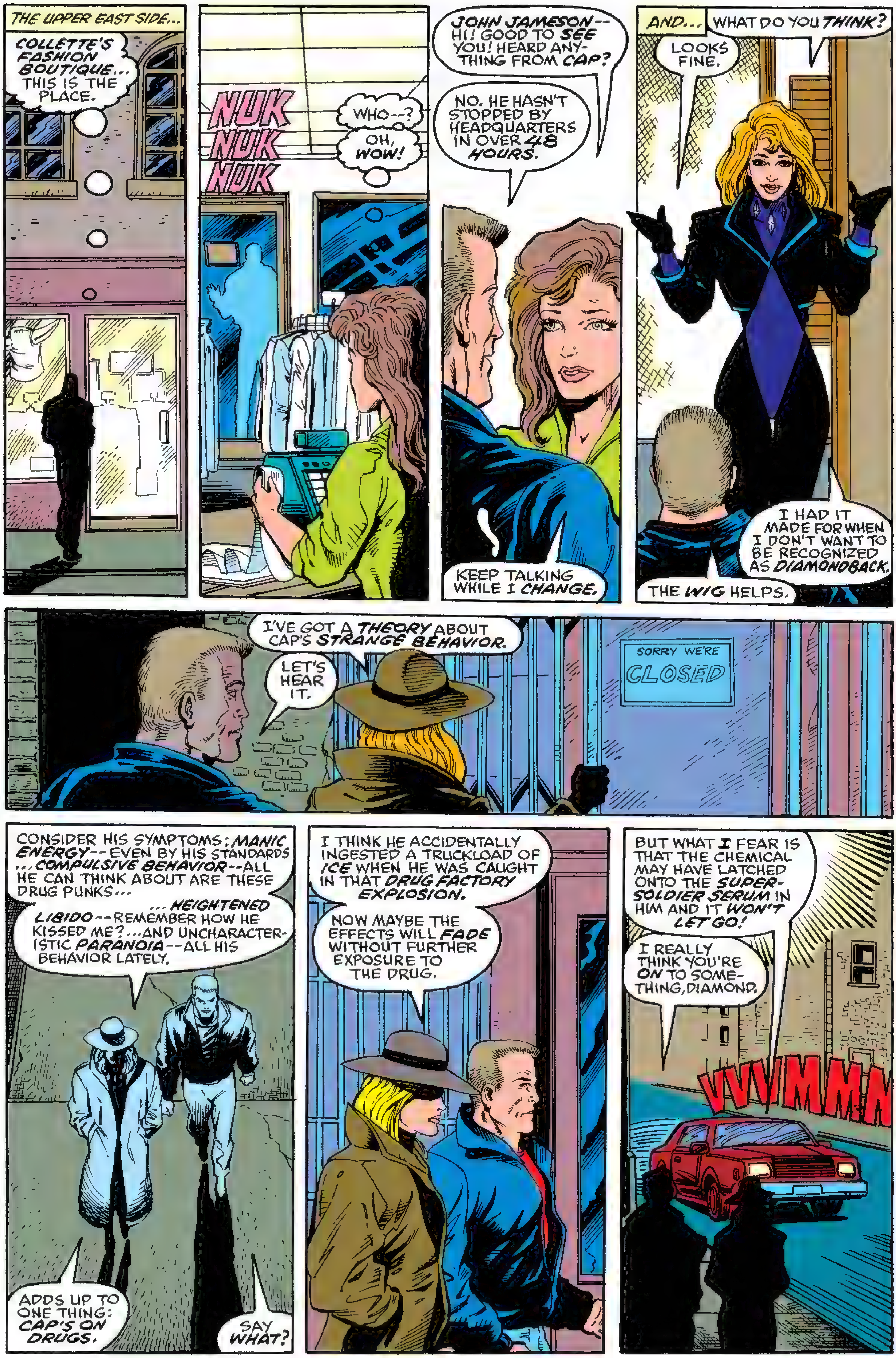
SAY, CAP... SEEMS TO ME LIKE THE DRUG PROBLEM IN AMERICA IS MORE A MATTER OF DECREASING THE DEMAND THAN THE SUPPLY.
IF THERE WEREN'T SUCH A DEMAND FOR ALL THIS CRUD, TRAFFICKERS WOULD STOP TRYING TO BRING SO MUCH INTO THE COUNTRY.
SO WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, JAMESON, IS WE SHOULD LET THE HOODLUMS CARRY ON UNCHECKED WHILE WE GO ABOUT DOING SOCIAL WORK, HMMM?
I CAN'T ACCEPT THAT.
MAYBE YOU OUGHT TO AT LEAST COORDINATE YOUR EFFORTS WITH THE DEA*... I MEAN, ISN'T THIS A LITTLE OUT OF THE AVENGERS' JURISDICTION?
LET'S GET SOMETHING STRAIGHT, O'BRIEN. I HIRED YOU ALL, YOU WORK FOR ME. I PAY YOU TO DO YOUR JOBS, NOT TO TRY TO SECOND-GUESS ME OR QUESTION MY DECISIONS! AM I MAKING MYSELF CLEAR?
YEAH... YES, SIR.
IF YOU GUYS AREN'T WITH THE PROGRAM--
--WHO THE DEVIL NEEDS YOU?
I CAN DO THIS ALL BY MYSELF.
*DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY.
DIAMONDBACK WAS RIGHT, MICHAEL... SOMETHING'S DEFINITELY WRONG WITH CAP... HE'S JUST NOT ACTING LIKE HIMSELF.
WHAT CAN WE DO? NEITHER OF US HAS THE AUTHORITY TO GO OVER HIS HEAD... CALL THE OTHER AVENGERS IN TO CHECK HIM OUT.
WHAT'S THE AVENGERS' CHARTER SAY ABOUT WHEN THE LEADER FLIPS OUT... BECOMES INCAPABLE OF COMMAND?
SOON, ON THE UPPER WEST SIDE...
IF HE THINKS HE CAN GET RID OF ME THAT EASILY, HE'D DO WELL TO THINK AGAIN!
MAYBE SOME OTHER CHICK WOULD GO AWAY ALL HURT AND TEARY-EYED IF HER MAIN SQUEEZE DUMPED ON HER LIKE CAP JUST DID WITH ME... BUT NOT THIS LADY.
I'VE BEEN DUMPED ON FAR WORSE THAN THAT-- AND I KNOW THAT WASN'T THE REAL CAP TALKING EITHER!
CAP'S IN DEEP EVEN IF HE DOESN'T KNOW IT YET, AND I'M NOT ABOUT TO DITCH HIM JUST BECAUSE HE'S MAD AT ME!
GOOD EXCUSE TO BREAK OUT MY UNDERCOVER COSTUME...
...KEEP TABS ON HIM WITHOUT HIS KNOWING IT...!

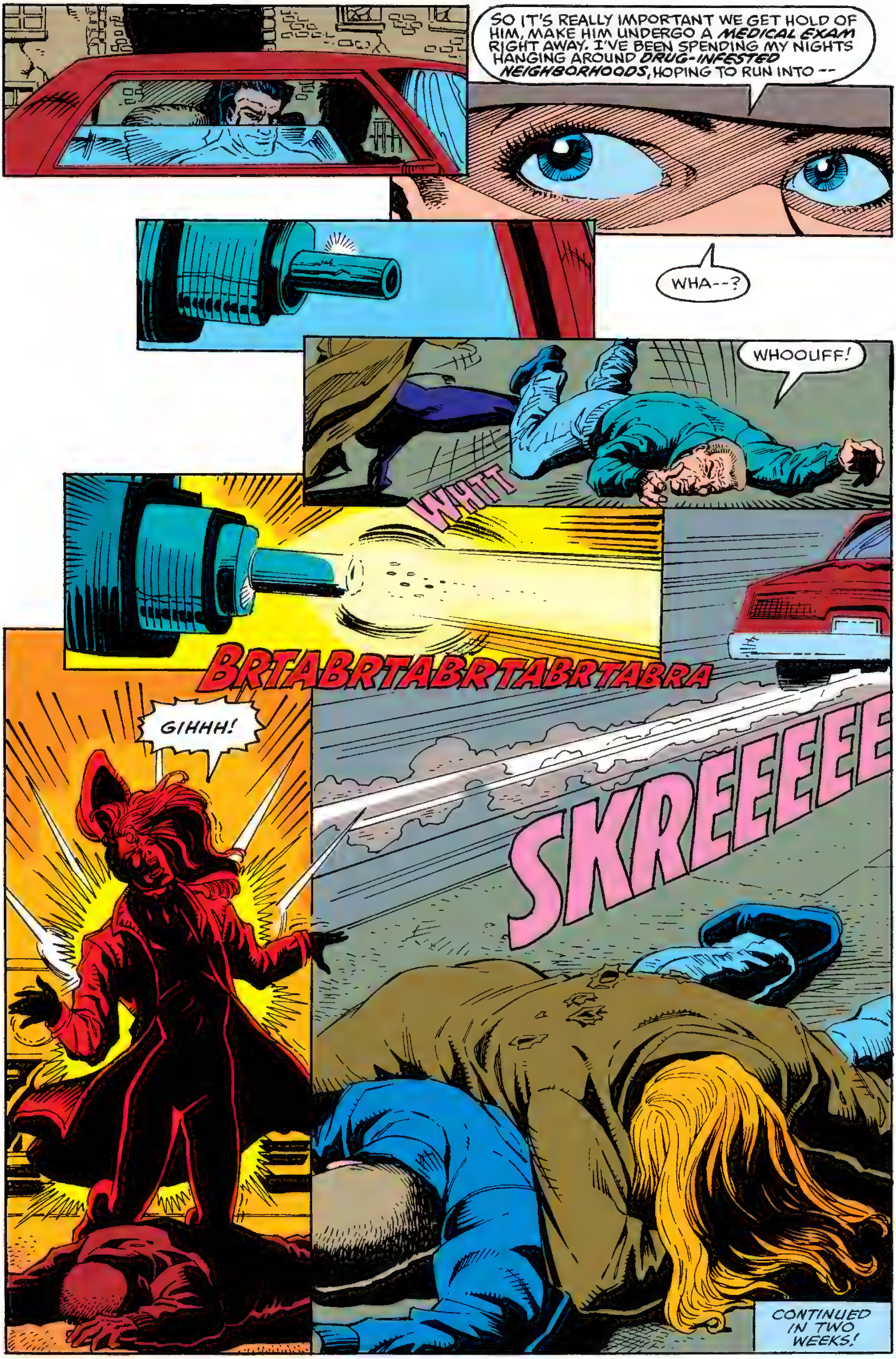

SOMEWHERE NEAR TIMES SQUARE...
LET ME ASK YOU ONE *LAST TIME*, JUNIOR. WHERE DID YOU GET THAT *ICE* I SAW YOU SMOKING?
GKK GKK GKKK
ARKON
TARGET-MASK A *SUPER-NARC* OR WHAT? GONNA *SKEWER* JULIO 'LESS SOMEONE *DOES* SOMETHING.
BLAST
FANCY *POKER* OF HIS AIN'T GOT NOTHIN' ON A *SNUB-NOSE*--
AIIIEGH!
TOUGH REACHING FOR YOUR *PIECE* WITH YOUR *HAND* STAPLED TO YOUR CHEST, HUH?
YOU GOT *TWO SECONDS* TO SPEAK BEFORE MY *SAI* POKES THROUGH THE SOFT TISSUE BEHIND YOUR *JAWBONE*.
ONE...
GUY NAMED *RITZO*--42ND AND 9TH!
WHAT'S HE *LOOK* LIKE?
TALL, DIRTY BLOND HAIR IN A PONYTAIL, DENIM JACKET--
THANKS.
WHAM
I FIND YOU *LIED*, I COME *LOOKING* FOR YOU.
GOOD NIGHT NOW.

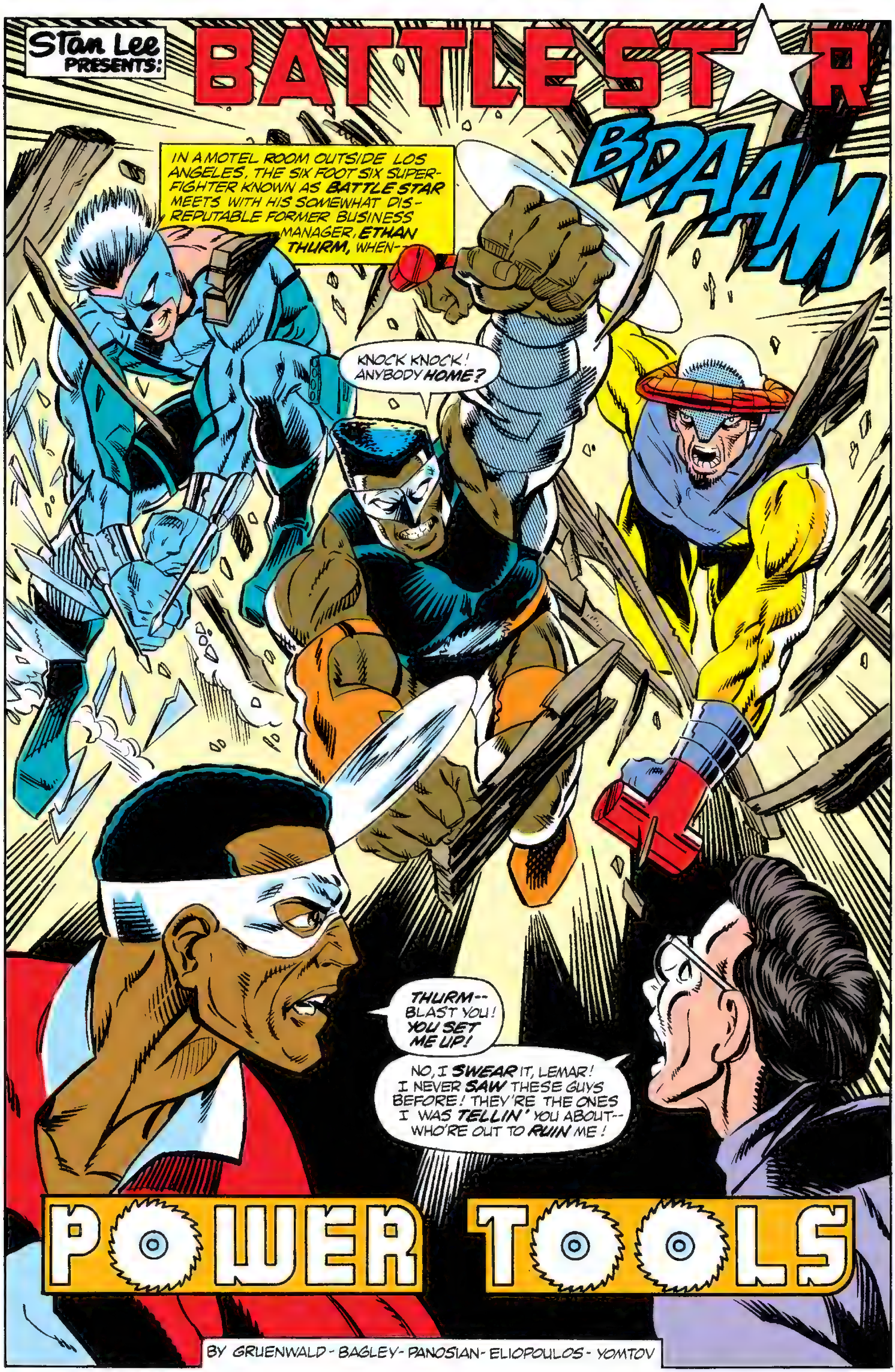

TWO NIGHTS LATER, MIDTOWN MANHATTAN...
AHHHH! FEELS LIKE AGES SINCE I LAST DID THIS!
AFTER ALL THOSE WEEKS WANDERING ABOUT UPSTATE, IT'S GOING TO TAKE ME A WHILE TO GET ACCLIMATED TO THE BIG CITY'S RHYTHMS AND SENSATIONS AGAIN...!
NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT. MY BALANCE, TIMING, JUDGMENT--
--ALL NEED A TUNE-UP!
UH-OH! MISJUDGED THE ARC OF MY SWING BY A FEW FRACTIONS OF A SECOND--
--I'M GOING TO MISS THAT FLAGPOLE!
GOT THE FLAG--
--BUT THEY JUST DON'T FASTEN THEM LIKE THEY USED TO!
BETTER TRY MY BILLY CLUB CABLE AGAIN--HOPE I FIND SOMETHING TO SKYHOOK!
THANK GOD FOR GARGOYLES!
LOOKS LIKE MANHATTAN'S REDDEST CRIMEFIGHTER WON'T BE GETTING ANY REDDER TONIGHT.
THE FLAG... IT TOUCHED THE GROUND, THANKS TO ME. WONDER WHAT CAPTAIN AMERICA WOULD HAVE ME DO--DESTROY IT?
HARD TO SAY. WHEN I RAN INTO CAPTAIN AMERICA LAST NIGHT,* THERE WAS SOMETHING REALLY OFF ABOUT HIM... HE WAS VERY EDGY, LIKE HE WAS OVERWORKED OR DISTRAUGHT ABOUT SOMETHING.
MAYBE MY FIRST ITEM OF BUSINESS BACK HERE IN THE APPLE OUGHT TO BE LOOKING IN ON HIM... SEEING IF HE NEEDS HELP.
*SEE DAREDEVIL #283, NOW ON SALE! --R.M.

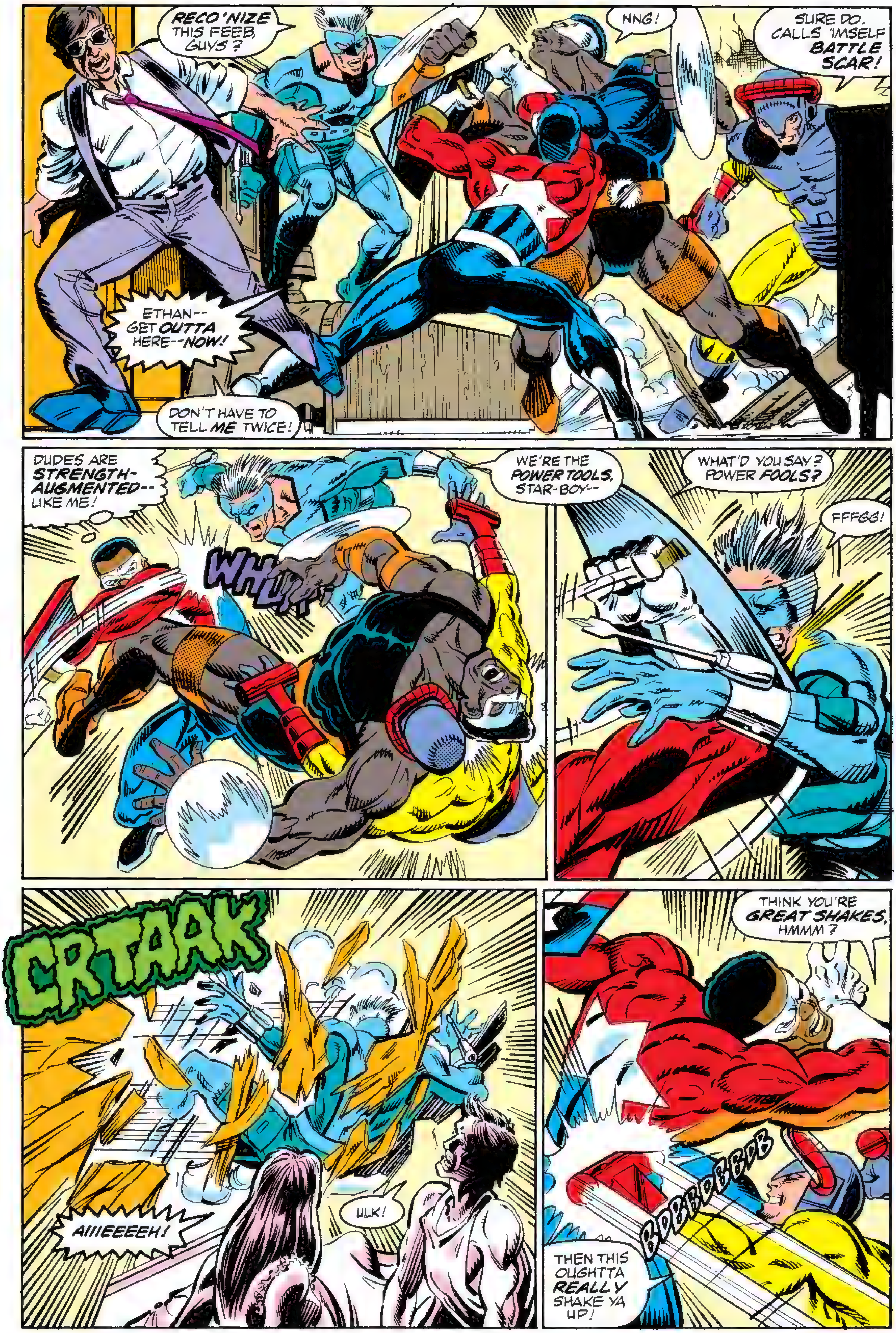

ELSEWHERE...
DON'T KNOW HOW I LET MYSELF GET DISTRACTED FROM MY MISSION BY THAT LITTLE EPISODE UPSTATE... BUT I'M BACK, AND NOTHING'S GOING TO STOP ME FROM CRACKING THIS DRUG RING NOW!
CAN'T GO BACK TO THE AVENGERS-- MAYBE I CAN STAY WITH SAM WILSON A WHILE.
WAIT! I'LL BET THAT BUSYBODY PEGGY CARTER CONTACTED HIM-- TOLD HIM ABOUT OUR FALLING OUT--TURNED HIM AGAINST ME!
BETTER NOT TRY--HEY, WHAT'S GOING ON DOWN THERE? A LIMO IN THIS PART OF THE CITY? SOMETHING ILLICIT'S GOING DOWN, I'LL BET.
MM-HMM. A DRUG DEAL IN PROGRESS. YOU'D THINK SOMEONE WHO COULD AFFORD A LIMOUSINE WOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO THROW HIS MONEY AND HIS HEALTH DOWN THE SEWER BY INGESTING CRUD.
MAYBE I'LL DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE "DEMAND" SIDE INSTEAD OF THE "SUPPLY" SIDE THIS TIME.
VRRM
SKREEE
BTRASH
TRYING TO DITCH ME. HOW QUAINT.
BETWEEN MY EXTREMELY MANEUVERABLE SKY-CYCLE, AND MY INDESTRUCTIBLE SHIELD--
--MR. DEMAND SIDE DOESN'T STAND A CHANCE!
KTNNK
THNNK


KRTEEEEEEE
YAIEEEEHH!
KREEEEECH
THE--!
WH-WH-WH--*WHAT*--?
MISTER, THE NAME'S *CAPTAIN AMERICA*, AND I'M HERE WITH A *PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT*.
Y-Y-Y-Y-YIH!
EVERY TIME YOU BUY *DRUGS* YOU ARE FINANCING *MURDER*.
IF *YOU* DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR *OWN HEALTH*, NEITHER DO *I*. BUT I DO CARE THAT YOU'RE CONTRIBUTING TO A *SUBCULTURE* THAT THRIVES ON *VIOLENCE, MURDER*, AND THE *POISONING* OF THIS NATION'S MOST *PRECIOUS RESOURCE*--ITS *YOUTH*.
GROW UP. GET RESPONSIBLE. STARTING *NOW*.
I THINK HE GOT THE *MESSAGE*.

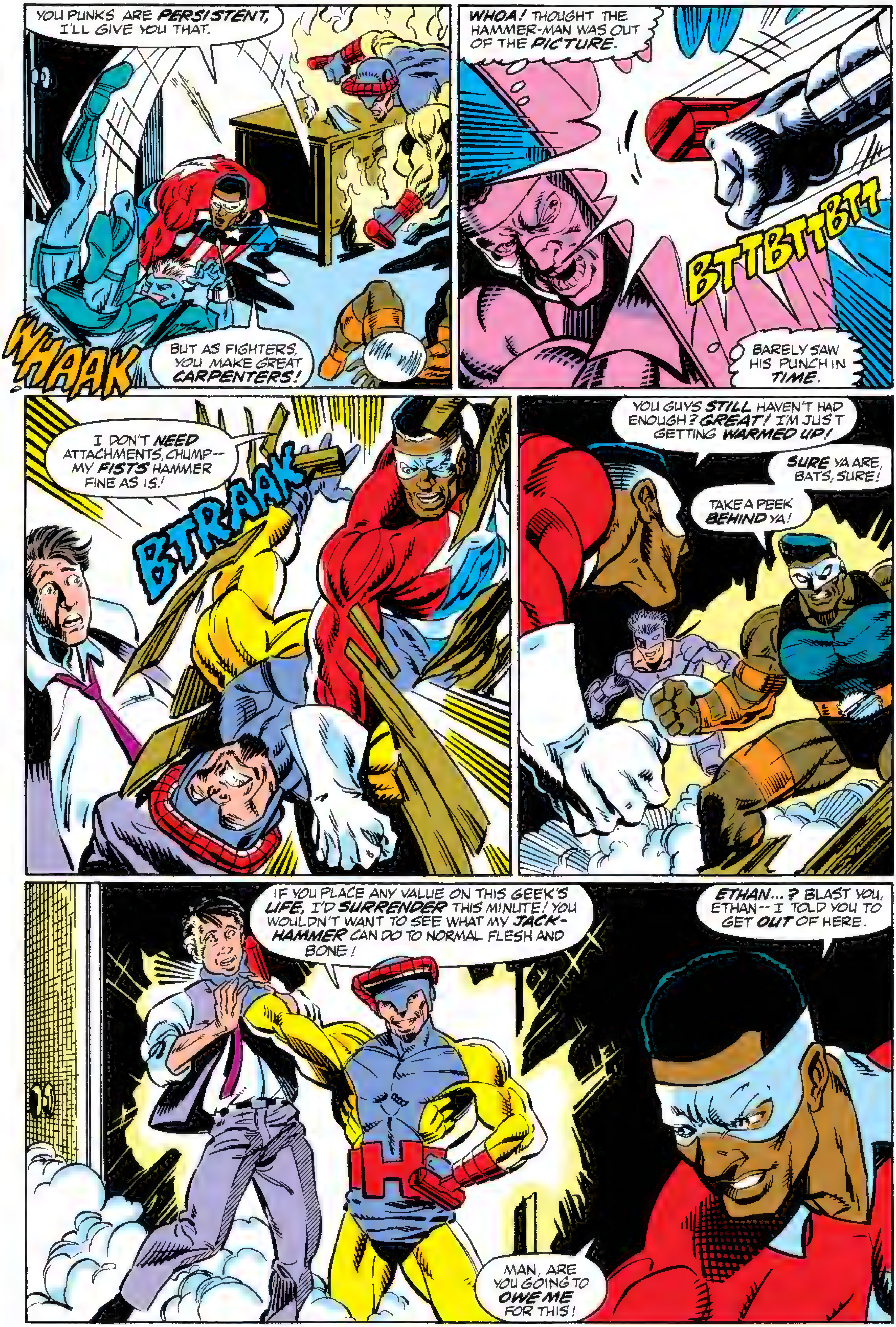

THE UPPER EAST SIDE...
COLLETTE'S FASHION BOUTIQUE... THIS IS THE PLACE.
NUK NUK NUK
WHO--?
OH, WOW!
JOHN JAMESON-- HI! GOOD TO SEE YOU! HEARD ANYTHING FROM CAP?
NO. HE HASN'T STOPPED BY HEADQUARTERS IN OVER 48 HOURS.
KEEP TALKING WHILE I CHANGE.
AND...
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
LOOKS FINE.
I HAD IT MADE FOR WHEN I DON'T WANT TO BE RECOGNIZED AS DIAMONDBACK.
THE WIG HELPS.
I'VE GOT A THEORY ABOUT CAP'S STRANGE BEHAVIOR.
LET'S HEAR IT.
SORRY WE'RE CLOSED
CONSIDER HIS SYMPTOMS: MANIC ENERGY--EVEN BY HIS STANDARDS ...COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR--ALL HE CAN THINK ABOUT ARE THESE DRUG PUNKS...
...HEIGHTENED LIBIDO--REMEMBER HOW HE KISSED ME?...AND UNCHARACTERISTIC PARANOIA--ALL HIS BEHAVIOR LATELY.
ADDS UP TO ONE THING: CAP'S ON DRUGS.
SAY WHAT?
I THINK HE ACCIDENTALLY INGESTED A TRUCKLOAD OF ICE WHEN HE WAS CAUGHT IN THAT DRUG FACTORY EXPLOSION.
NOW MAYBE THE EFFECTS WILL FADE WITHOUT FURTHER EXPOSURE TO THE DRUG.
BUT WHAT I FEAR IS THAT THE CHEMICAL MAY HAVE LATCHED ONTO THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM IN HIM AND IT WON'T LET GO!
I REALLY THINK YOU'RE ON TO SOMETHING, DIAMOND.
VVVMMM

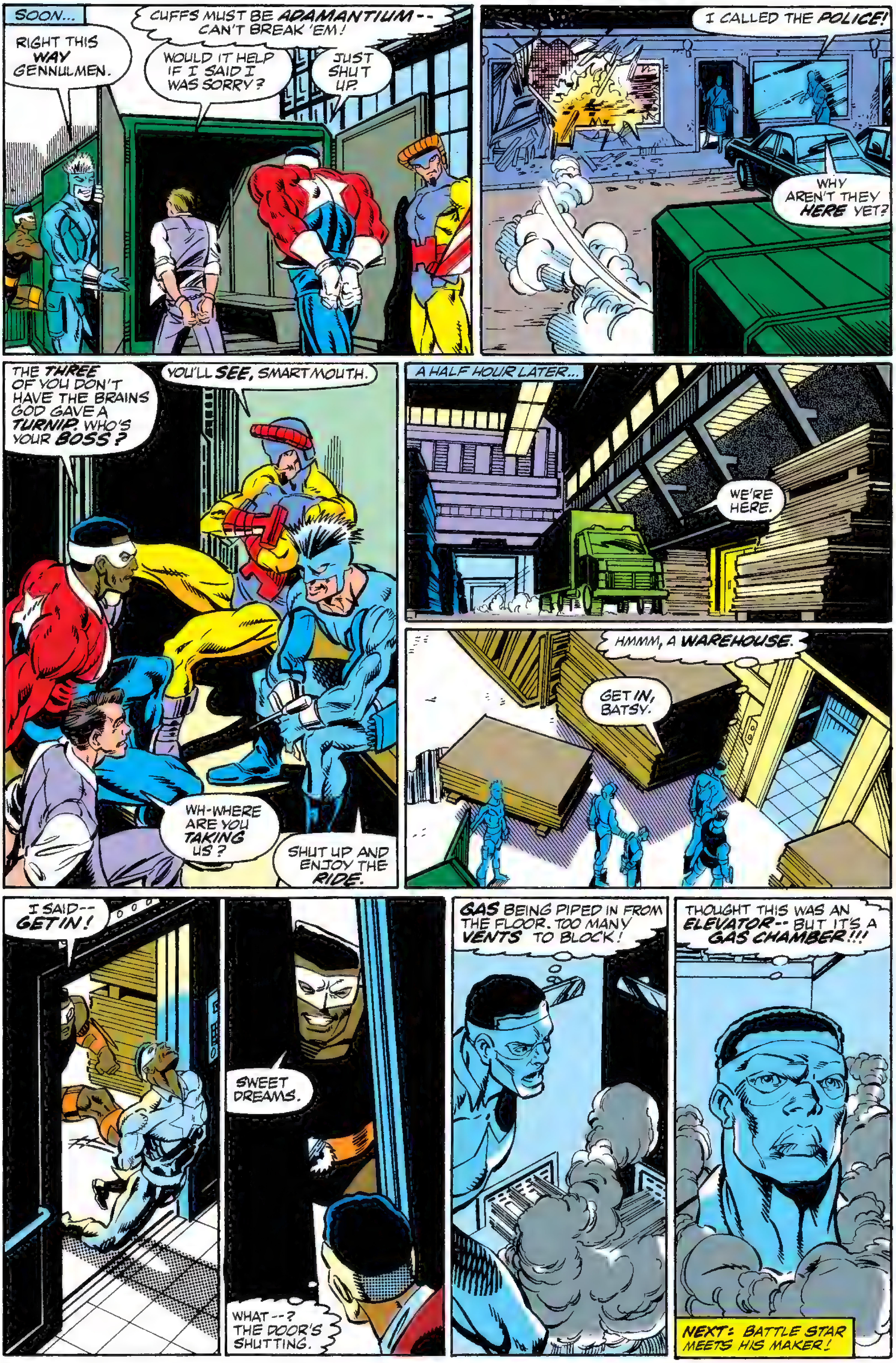

SO IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT WE GET HOLD OF HIM, MAKE HIM UNDERGO A *MEDICAL EXAM* RIGHT AWAY. I'VE BEEN SPENDING MY NIGHTS HANGING AROUND *DRUG-INFESTED NEIGHBORHOODS*, HOPING TO RUN INTO --
WHA--?
WHOOUFF!
WHTT
BRTABRTABRTABRTABRTABRA
GIHHH!
SKREEEEEE
CONTINUED IN TWO WEEKS!


Stan Lee PRESENTS:
BATTLESTAR
BDAAM
IN A MOTEL ROOM OUTSIDE LOS ANGELES, THE SIX FOOT SIX SUPER-FIGHTER KNOWN AS BATTLESTAR MEETS WITH HIS SOMEWHAT DISREPUTABLE FORMER BUSINESS MANAGER, ETHAN THURM, WHEN--
KNOCK KNOCK! ANYBODY HOME?
THURM-- BLAST YOU! YOU SET ME UP!
NO, I SWEAR IT, LEMAR! I NEVER SAW THESE GUYS BEFORE! THEY'RE THE ONES I WAS TELLIN' YOU ABOUT-- WHO'RE OUT TO RUIN ME!
POWER TOOLS
BY GRUENWALD - BAGLEY - PANOSIAN - ELIOPOULOS - YOMTOV


RECO'NIZE THIS FEEB, GUYS?
NNG!
SURE DO. CALLS 'IMSELF BATTLE SCAR!
ETHAN-- GET OUTTA HERE--NOW!
DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME TWICE!
DUDES ARE STRENGTH-AUGMENTED-- LIKE ME!
WE'RE THE POWER TOOLS, STAR-BOY--
WHUK
WHAT'D YOU SAY? POWER FOOLS?
FFFGG!
CRTAAK
AIIIEEEEH!
ULK!
THINK YOU'RE GREAT SHAKES, HMMM?
BDBBDBBBDB
THEN THIS OUGHTTA REALLY SHAKE YA UP!

BT ZUUUK
SAY, THAT HAMMER ON YOUR HAND DOESN'T CONDUCT ELECTRICITY BY ANY CHANCE, DOES IT?
WHA--?
YAIIIEH!
TZZZVVVT
UH-OH. THE GUY WITH THE BUZZSAWS WANTS TO PLAY SOME MORE!
THOUGHT SO.
BOY OH BOY OH BOY, WHAT DOES THE LORD HAVE AGAINST ME? CAN MY LUCK POSSIBLY GET ANY WORSE?
ALL I WANT TO DO IS MAKE A GOOD CLEAN LIVING AS A FIGHT PROMOTER-- AND I JUST CAN'T CATCH A BREAK!
FIRST THE BATTLIN' BEYONDER TAKES A POWDER, THEN THE SUPER-PATRIOT GETS TAPPED BY THE FEDS, THEN LEFT- AND RIGHT-WINGER GET BURNS OVER 90 PERCENT OF THEIR BODIES--
--AND THEN MY NEWEST CLIENT, THE RED ZEPPELIN, GOES AND GETS HIMSELF KIDNAPPED! THE RUFFIANS OUTSIDE DID IT, TOO--I JUST KNOW IT.
AN' I'LL BET THEY WERE SENT TO SNUFF ME BEFORE I COULD BLOW THE WHISTLE ON 'EM!
BUT IF ANYONE CAN KEEP ME ALIVE, IT'S GOOD OL'--
BRRRRRRRRTZZZ
YEOW!
MAN, I KNOCK THEM DOWN, THEY JUST KEEP GETTING UP. STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY WANT WITH ETHAN!
VRRTING
WHUUH!


YOU PUNKS ARE PERSISTENT, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT.
WHAAK
BUT AS FIGHTERS, YOU MAKE GREAT CARPENTERS!
WHOA! THOUGHT THE HAMMER-MAN WAS OUT OF THE PICTURE.
BTTBTTBTT
BARELY SAW HIS PUNCH IN TIME.
I DON'T NEED ATTACHMENTS, CHUMP-- MY FISTS HAMMER FINE AS IS!
BTRAAK
YOU GUYS STILL HAVEN'T HAD ENOUGH? GREAT! I'M JUST GETTING WARMED UP!
SURE YA ARE, BATS, SURE!
TAKE A PEEK BEHIND YA!
IF YOU PLACE ANY VALUE ON THIS GEEK'S LIFE, I'D SURRENDER THIS MINUTE! YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO SEE WHAT MY JACK-HAMMER CAN DO TO NORMAL FLESH AND BONE!
ETHAN...? BLAST YOU, ETHAN-- I TOLD YOU TO GET OUT OF HERE.
MAN, ARE YOU GOING TO OWE ME FOR THIS!


SOON...
CUFFS MUST BE ADAMANTIUM-- CAN'T BREAK 'EM!
RIGHT THIS WAY GENNULMEN.
WOULD IT HELP IF I SAID I WAS SORRY?
JUST SHUT UP.
I CALLED THE POLICE!
WHY AREN'T THEY HERE YET?
THE THREE OF YOU DON'T HAVE THE BRAINS GOD GAVE A TURNIP. WHO'S YOUR BOSS?
YOU'LL SEE, SMARTMOUTH.
WH-WHERE ARE YOU TAKING US?
SHUT UP AND ENJOY THE RIDE.
A HALF HOUR LATER...
WE'RE HERE.
HMMM, A WAREHOUSE.
GET IN, BATSY.
I SAID-- GET IN!
SWEET DREAMS.
WHAT--? THE DOOR'S SHUTTING.
GAS BEING PIPED IN FROM THE FLOOR. TOO MANY VENTS TO BLOCK!
THOUGHT THIS WAS AN ELEVATOR-- BUT IT'S A GAS CHAMBER!!!
NEXT: BATTLE STAR MEETS HIS MAKER!

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CAP GOES WILD!
...AND DAREDEVIL® IS NOT HAPPY ABOUT IT!
Ron Lim 90
DAN BULANADI

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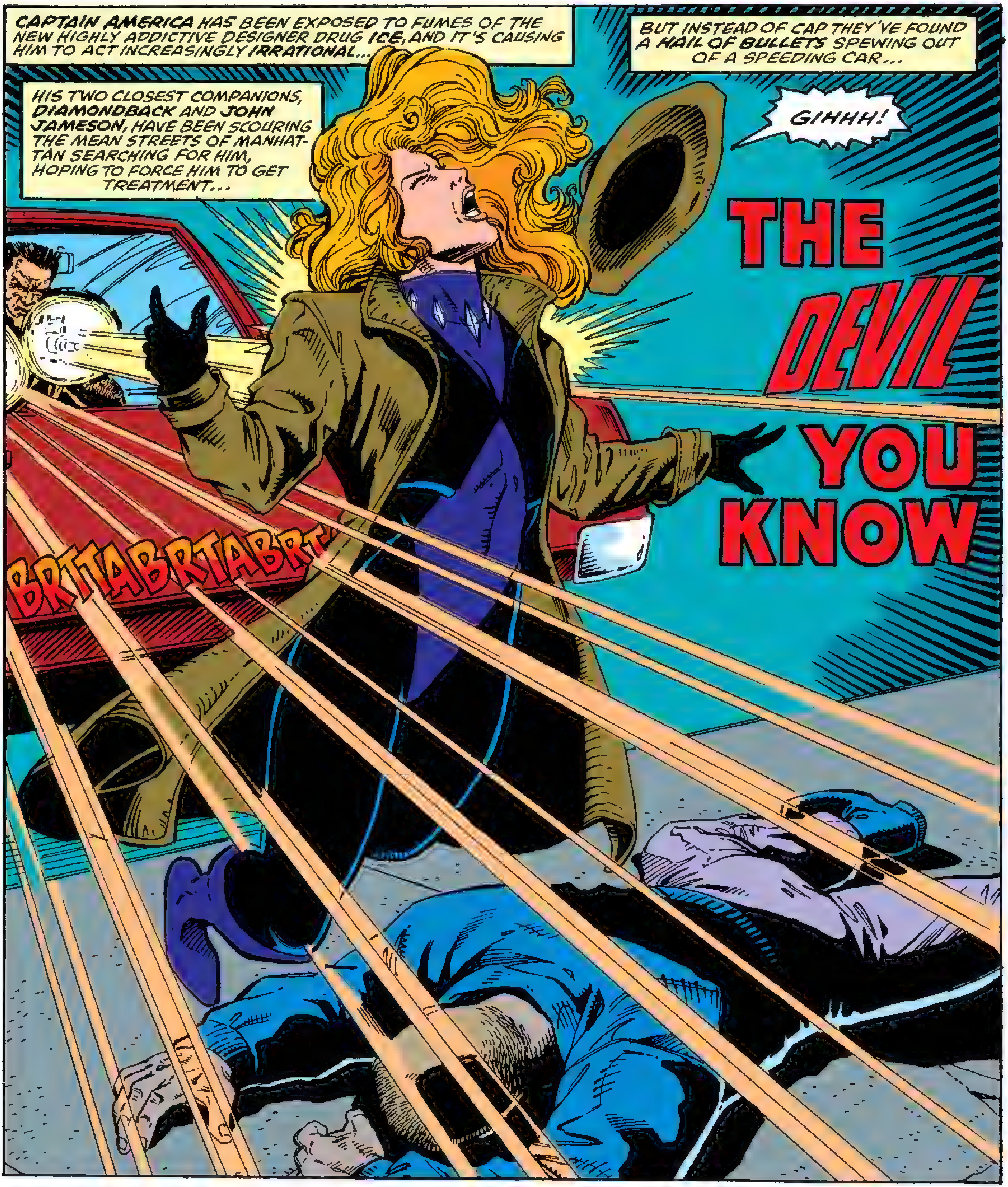
STEVE ROGERS . . . BORN IN THE U.S.A., RAISED TO CHERISH THE IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY, ENDOWED WITH A SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE, AND DRIVEN TO BE THE MOST CAPABLE COMBATANT IN THE WORLD. NOW AS BOTH LONE CRUSADER AND LEADER OF THE RENOWNED AVENGERS, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM! STAN LEE PRESENTS . . . CAPTAIN AMERICA!


CAPTAIN AMERICA HAS BEEN EXPOSED TO FUMES OF THE NEW HIGHLY ADDICTIVE DESIGNER DRUG ICE, AND IT'S CAUSING HIM TO ACT INCREASINGLY IRRATIONAL...
HIS TWO CLOSEST COMPANIONS, DIAMONDBACK AND JOHN JAMESON, HAVE BEEN SCOURING THE MEAN STREETS OF MANHATTAN SEARCHING FOR HIM, HOPING TO FORCE HIM TO GET TREATMENT...
BUT INSTEAD OF CAP THEY'VE FOUND A HAIL OF BULLETS SPEWING OUT OF A SPEEDING CAR...
GIHHH!
THE DEVIL YOU KNOW
BRTTABRTABRT

MARK GRUENWALD WRITER | RON LIM PENCILER | DANNY BULANADI INKER | JOE ROSEN LETTERER | STEVE BUCCELLATO COLORIST | RALPH MACCHIO EDITOR | TOM DeFALCO ED IN CHIEF

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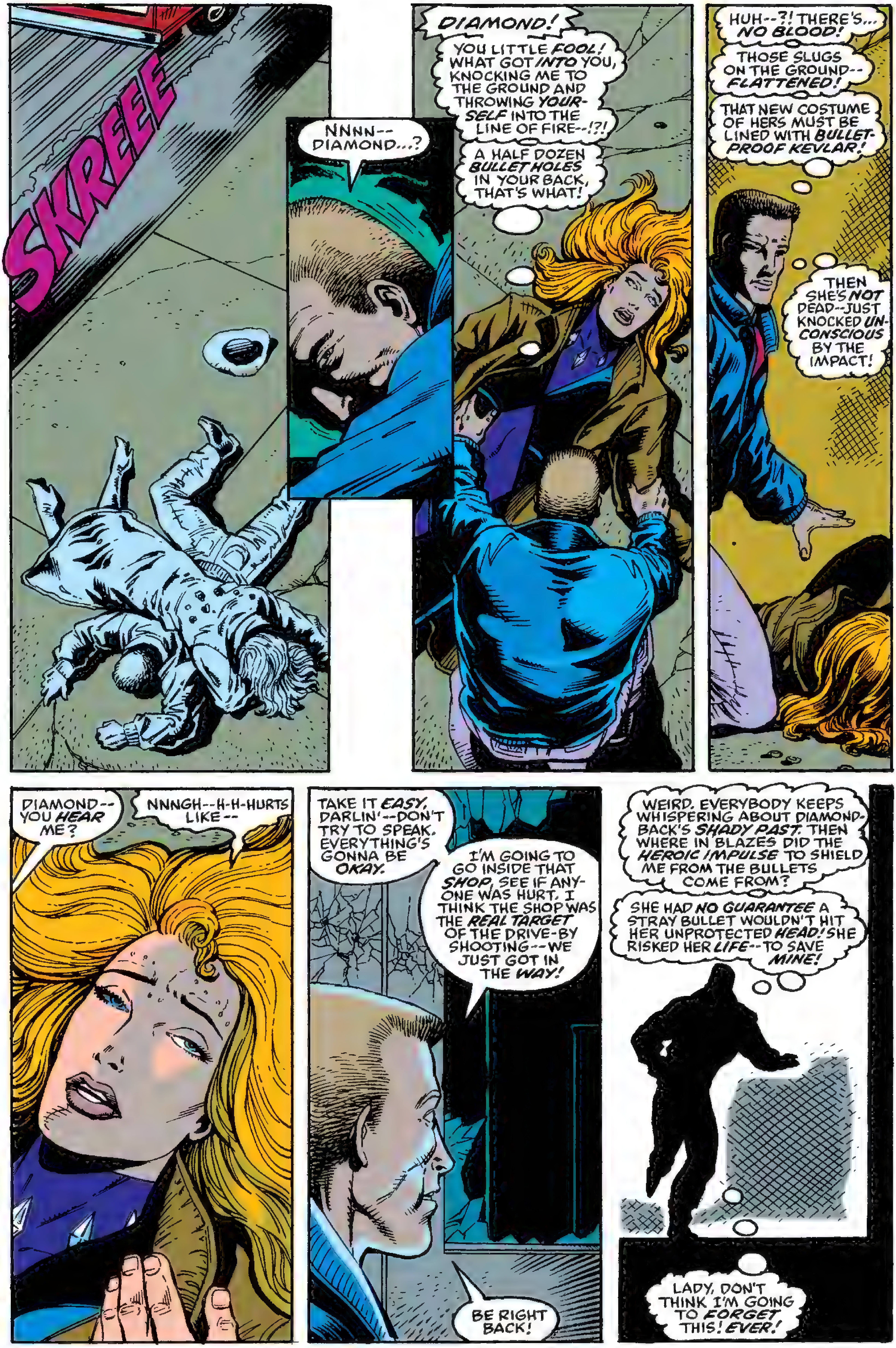
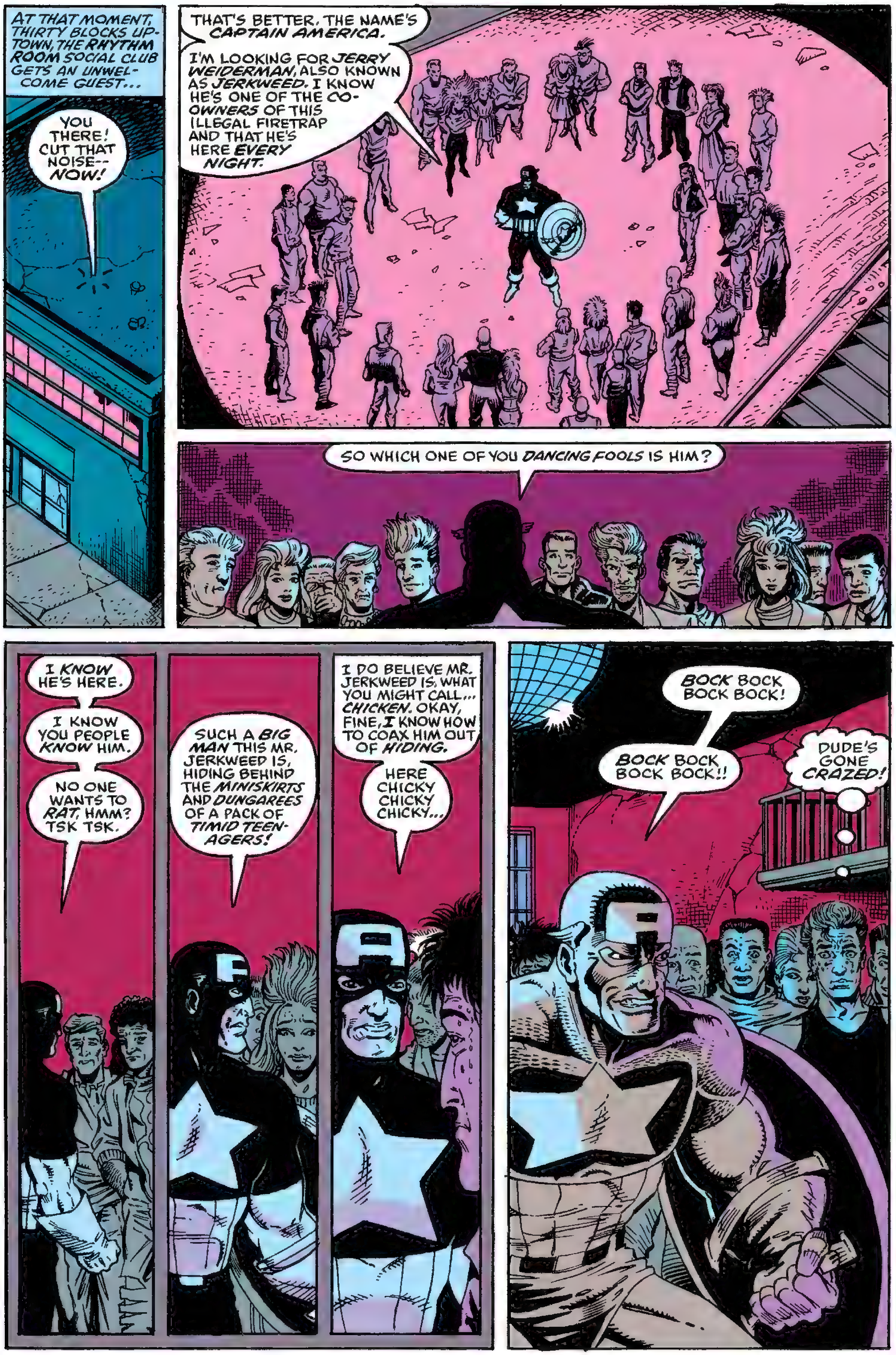
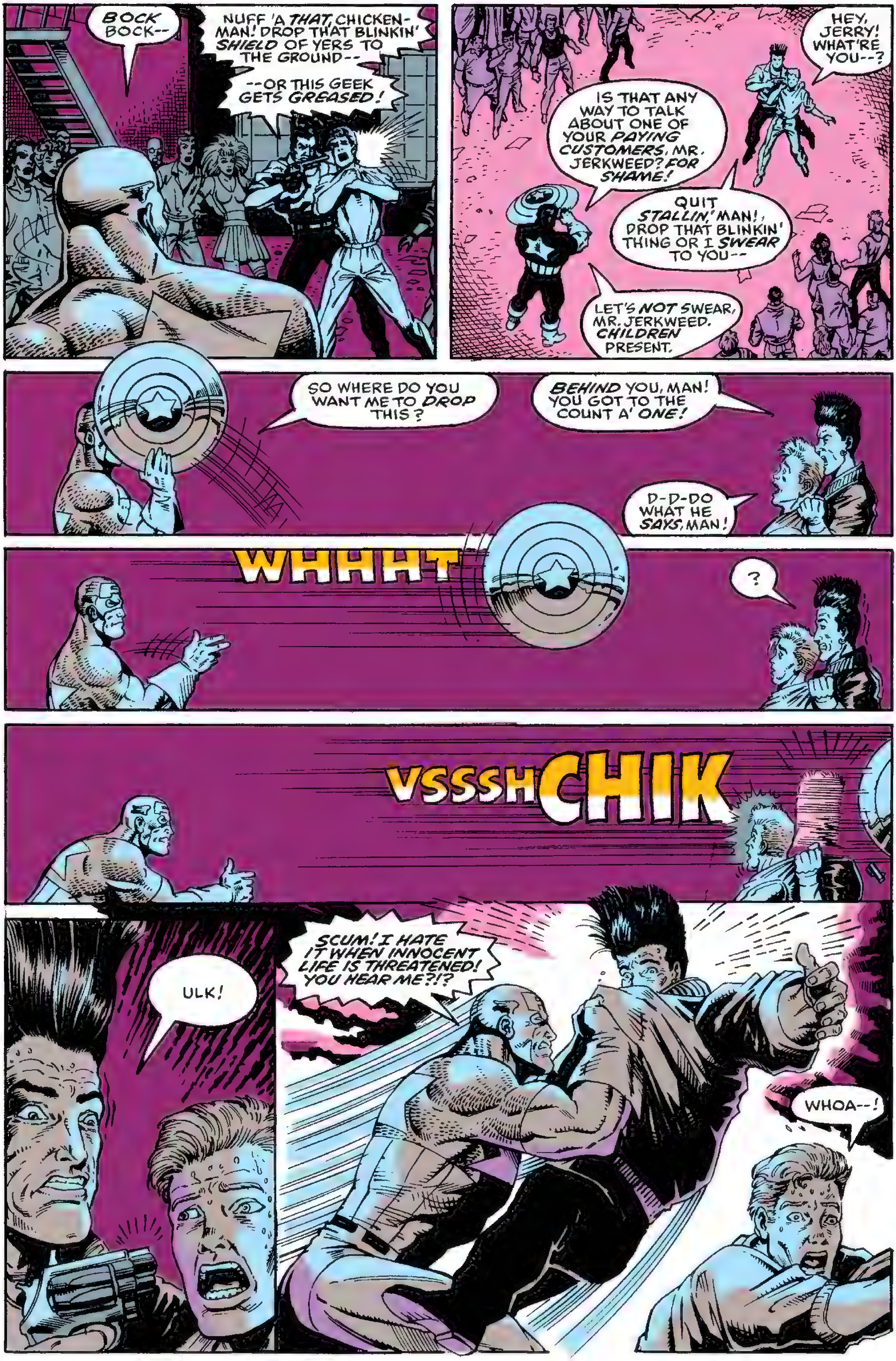
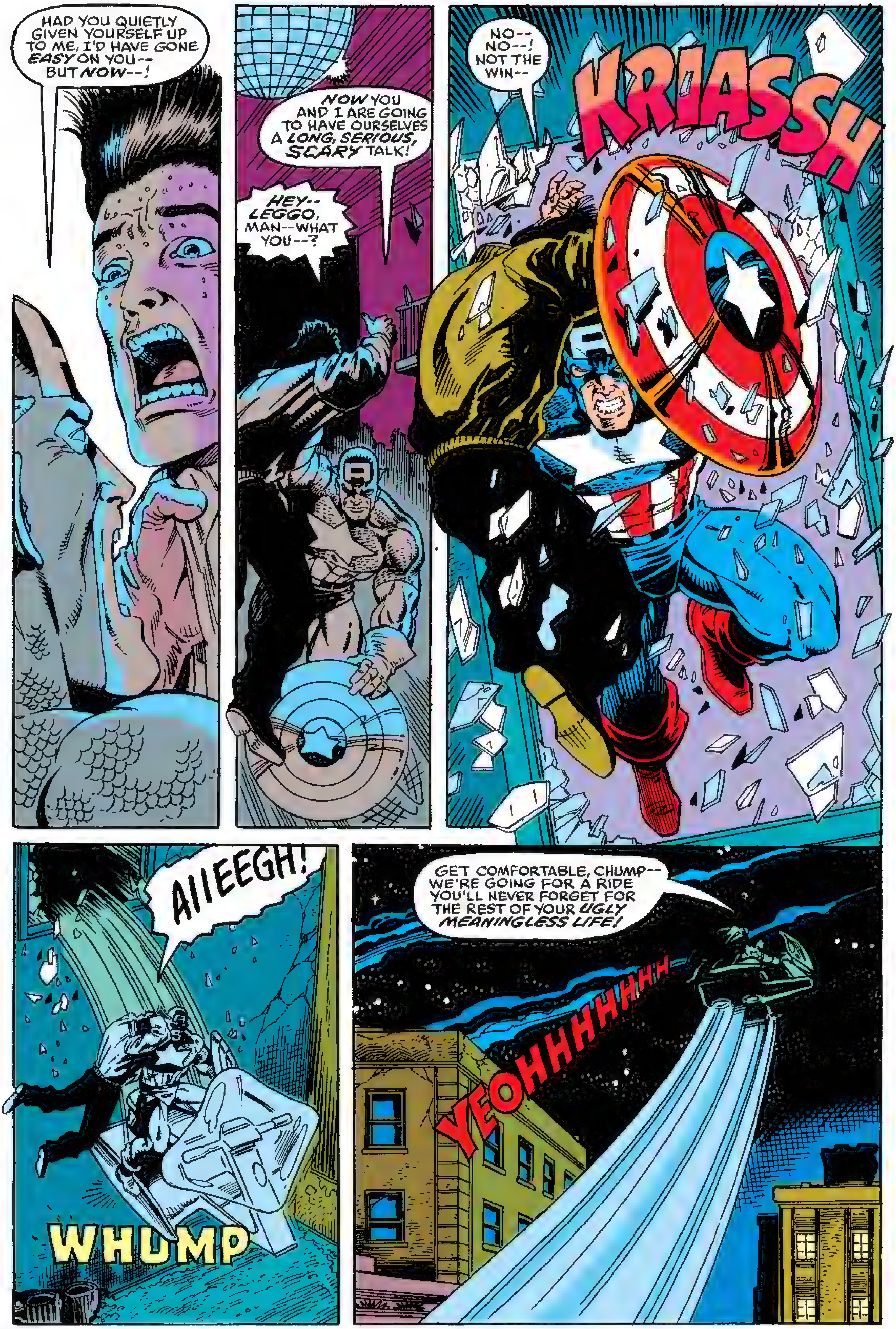
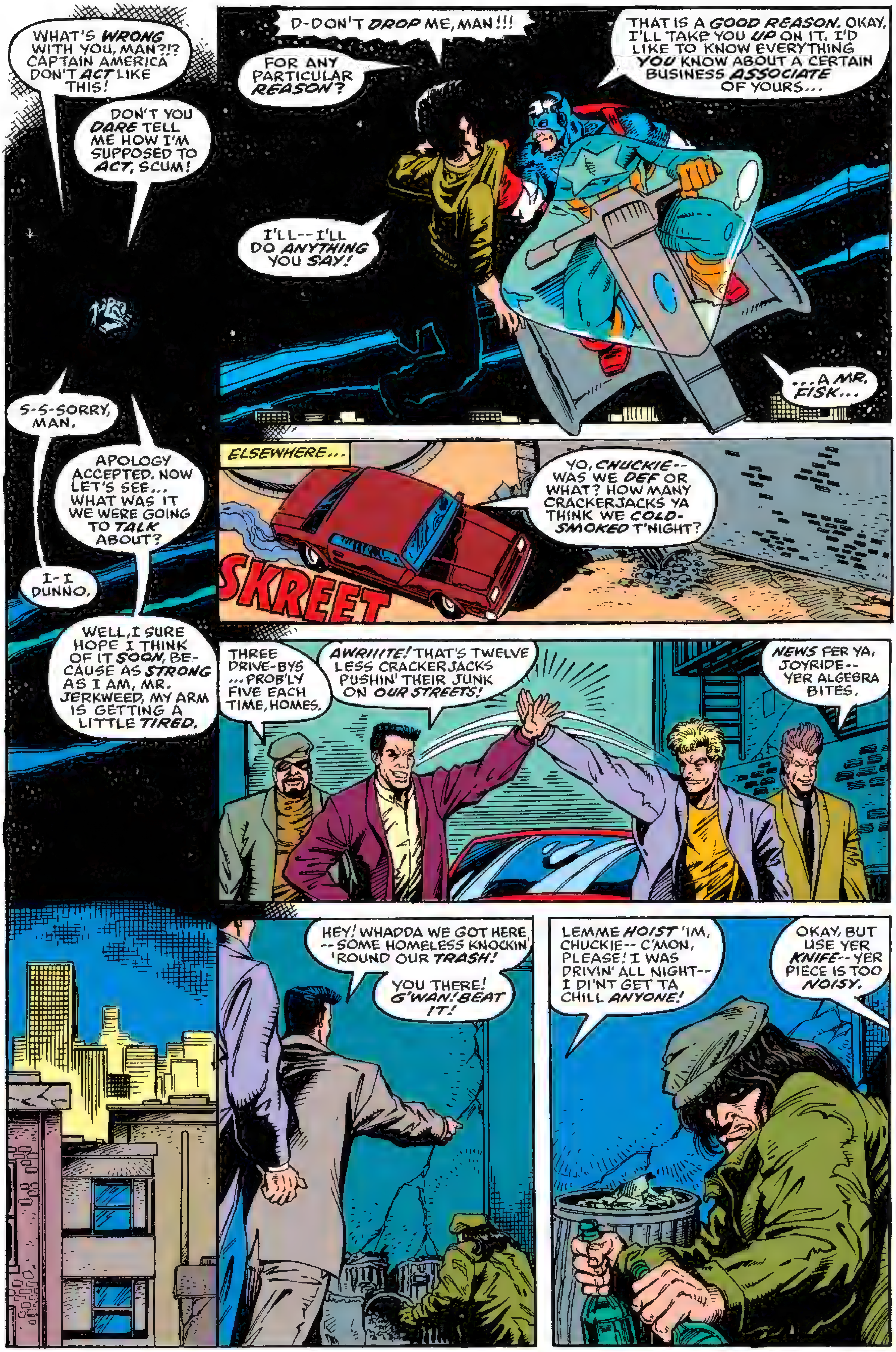
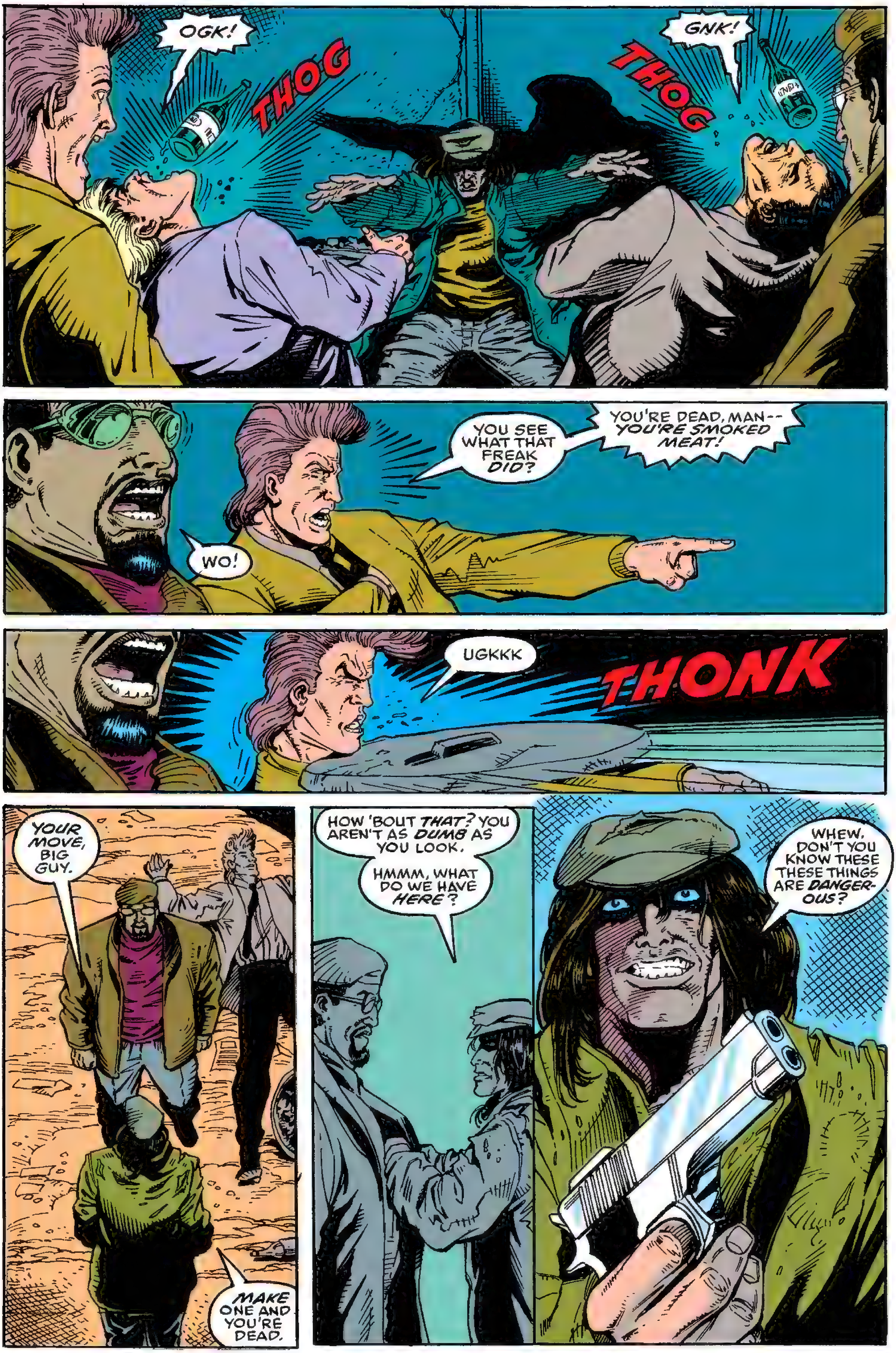

SKREEE
NNNN-- DIAMOND...?
DIAMOND!
YOU LITTLE FOOL! WHAT GOT INTO YOU, KNOCKING ME TO THE GROUND AND THROWING YOURSELF INTO THE LINE OF FIRE--!?!
A HALF DOZEN BULLET HOLES IN YOUR BACK, THAT'S WHAT!
HUH--?! THERE'S... NO BLOOD!
THOSE SLUGS ON THE GROUND-- FLATTENED!
THAT NEW COSTUME OF HERS MUST BE LINED WITH BULLET-PROOF KEVLAR!
THEN SHE'S NOT DEAD--JUST KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS BY THE IMPACT!
DIAMOND-- YOU HEAR ME?
NNNGH--H-H-HURTS LIKE--
TAKE IT EASY, DARLIN'--DON'T TRY TO SPEAK. EVERYTHING'S GONNA BE OKAY.
I'M GOING TO GO INSIDE THAT SHOP, SEE IF ANYONE WAS HURT. I THINK THE SHOP WAS THE REAL TARGET OF THE DRIVE-BY SHOOTING--WE JUST GOT IN THE WAY!
BE RIGHT BACK!
WEIRD. EVERYBODY KEEPS WHISPERING ABOUT DIAMONDBACK'S SHADY PAST. THEN WHERE IN BLAZES DID THE HEROIC IMPULSE TO SHIELD ME FROM THE BULLETS COME FROM?
SHE HAD NO GUARANTEE A STRAY BULLET WOULDN'T HIT HER UNPROTECTED HEAD! SHE RISKED HER LIFE--TO SAVE MINE!
LADY, DON'T THINK I'M GOING TO FORGET THIS! EVER!

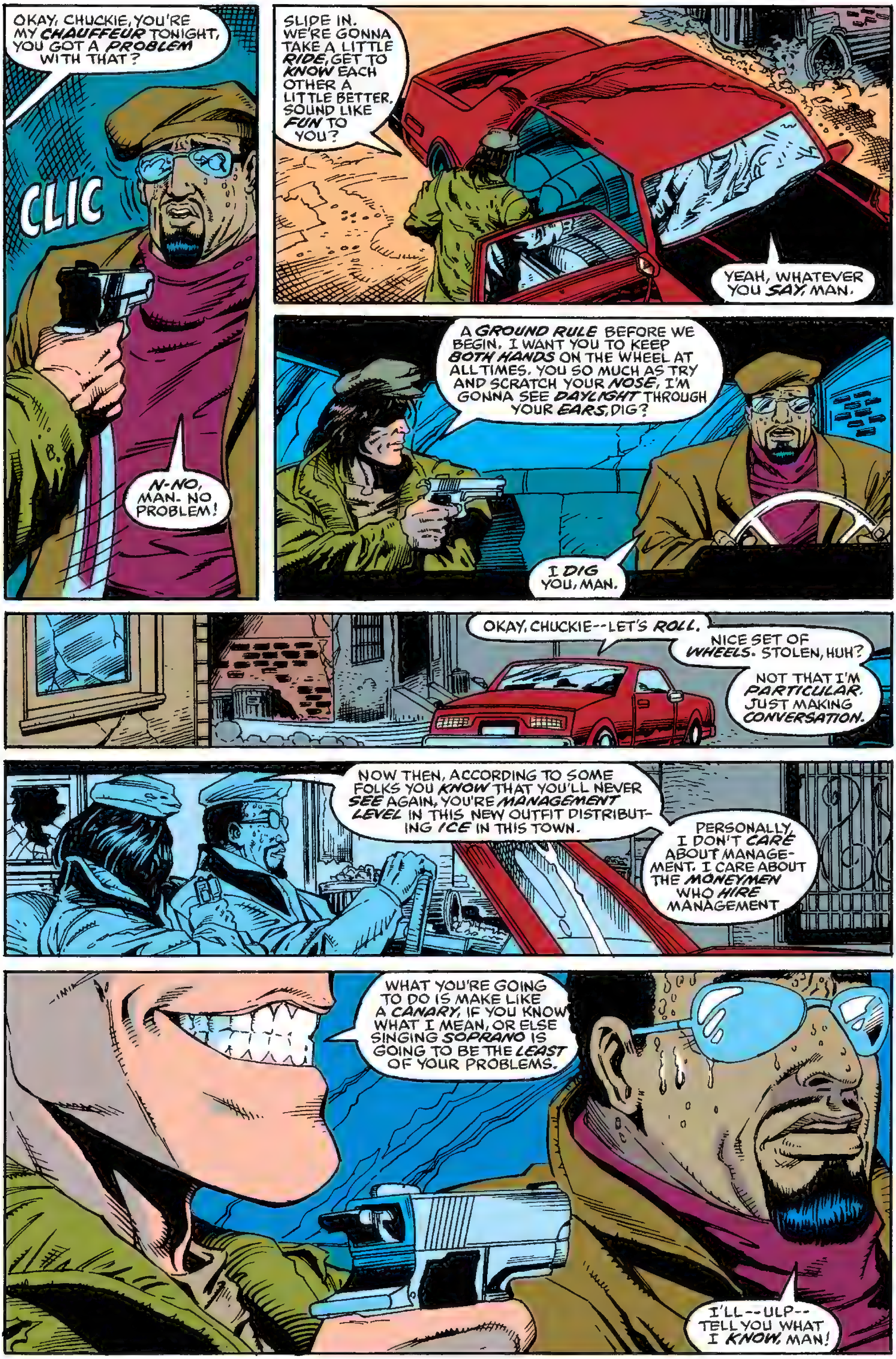

AT THAT MOMENT, THIRTY BLOCKS UPTOWN, THE RHYTHM ROOM SOCIAL CLUB GETS AN UNWELCOME GUEST...
YOU THERE! CUT THAT NOISE-- NOW!
THAT'S BETTER. THE NAME'S CAPTAIN AMERICA.
I'M LOOKING FOR JERRY WEIDERMAN, ALSO KNOWN AS JERKWEED. I KNOW HE'S ONE OF THE CO-OWNERS OF THIS ILLEGAL FIRETRAP AND THAT HE'S HERE EVERY NIGHT.
SO WHICH ONE OF YOU DANCING FOOLS IS HIM?
I KNOW HE'S HERE.
I KNOW YOU PEOPLE KNOW HIM.
NO ONE WANTS TO RAT, HMM? TSK TSK.
SUCH A BIG MAN THIS MR. JERKWEED IS, HIDING BEHIND THE MINISKIRTS AND DUNGAREES OF A PACK OF TIMID TEENAGERS!
I DO BELIEVE MR. JERKWEED IS, WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL... CHICKEN. OKAY, FINE, I KNOW HOW TO COAX HIM OUT OF HIDING.
HERE CHICKY CHICKY CHICKY...
BOCK BOCK BOCK BOCK!
BOCK BOCK BOCK BOCK!!
DUDE'S GONE CRAZED!

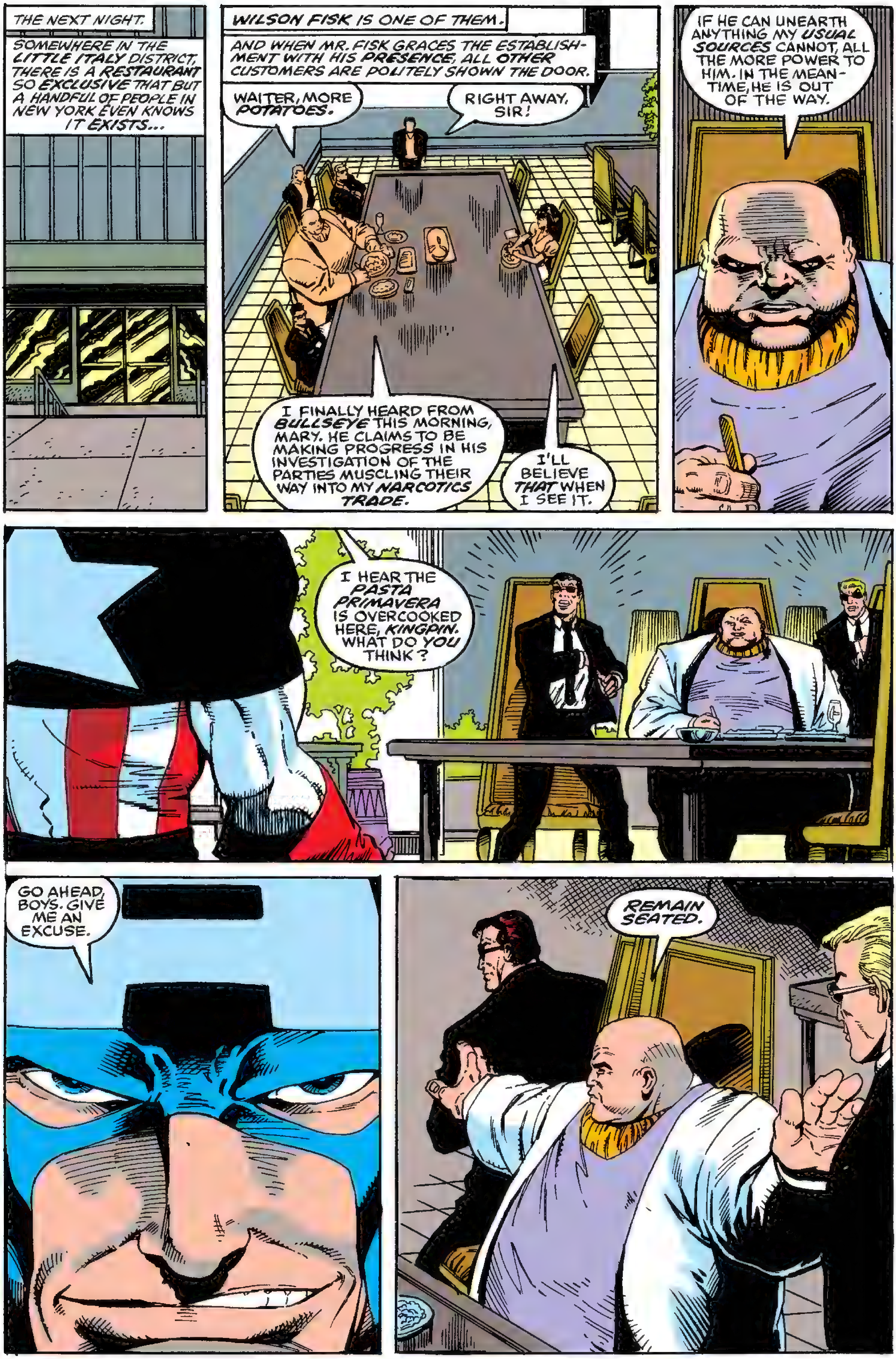

BOCK BOCK--
NUFF 'A *THAT*, CHICKEN-MAN! DROP THAT BLINKIN' *SHIELD* OF YERS TO THE GROUND--
--OR THIS GEEK GETS *GREASED!*
HEY, JERRY! WHAT'RE YOU--?
IS THAT ANY WAY TO TALK ABOUT ONE OF YOUR *PAYING CUSTOMERS*, MR. JERKWEED? *FOR SHAME!*
QUIT *STALLIN'* MAN!, DROP THAT BLINKIN' THING OR I *SWEAR* TO YOU--
LET'S *NOT* SWEAR, MR. JERKWEED. *CHILDREN* PRESENT.
SO WHERE DO YOU WANT ME TO *DROP* THIS?
BEHIND YOU, MAN! YOU GOT TO THE COUNT A' *ONE!*
D-D-DO WHAT HE *SAYS*, MAN!
WHHHT
?
VSSSHCHIK
ULK!
SCUM! I HATE IT WHEN INNOCENT LIFE IS THREATENED! YOU HEAR ME?!?
WHOA--!

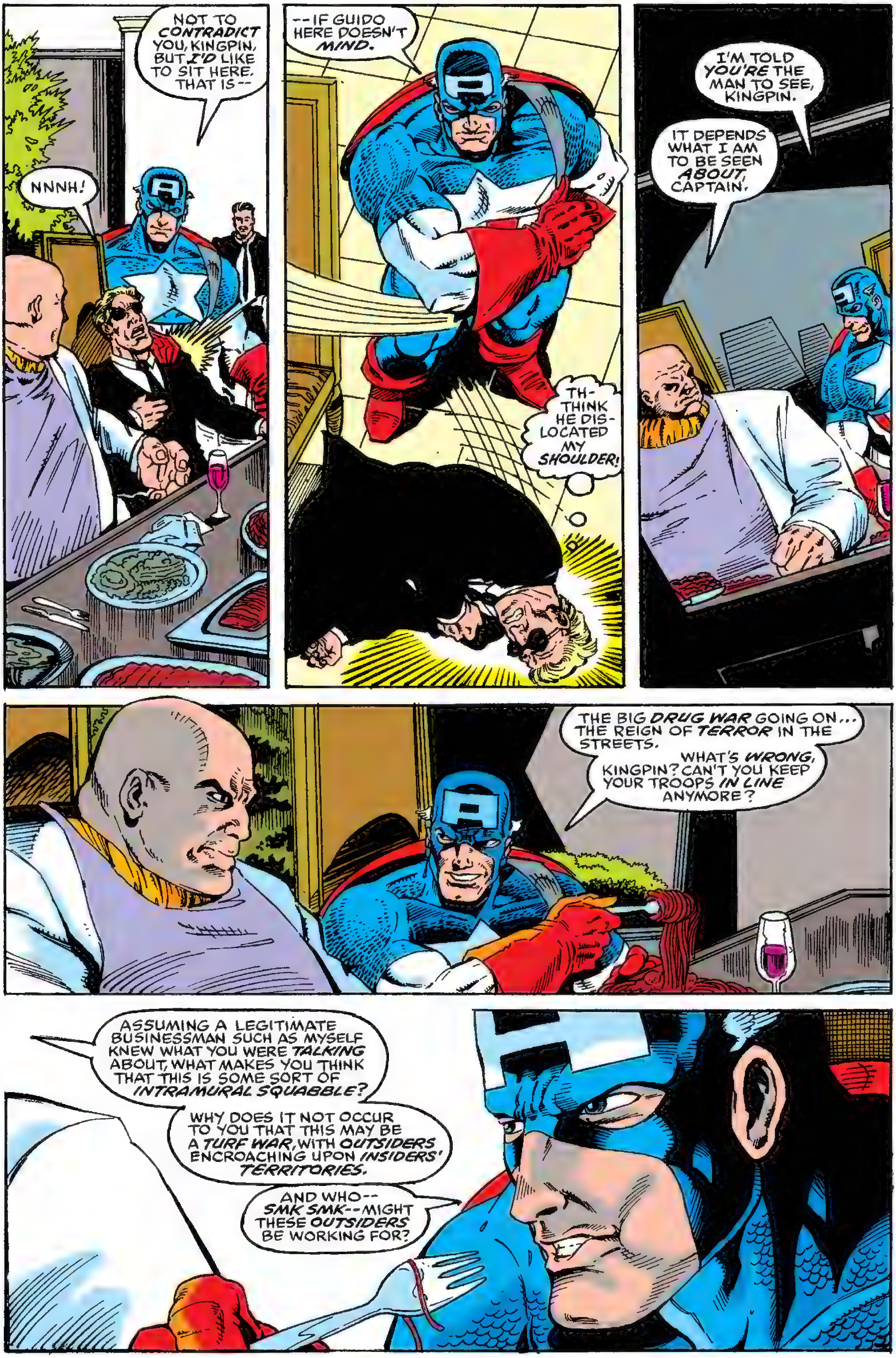

HAD YOU QUIETLY GIVEN YOURSELF UP TO ME, I'D HAVE GONE *EASY* ON YOU-- BUT *NOW*--!
NOW YOU AND I ARE GOING TO HAVE OURSELVES A *LONG, SERIOUS, SCARY* TALK!
HEY-- LEGGO, MAN--WHAT YOU--?
NO-- NO--! NOT THE WIN--
KRIASSH
AIIEEGH!
WHUMP
GET COMFORTABLE, CHUMP-- WE'RE GOING FOR A RIDE YOU'LL NEVER FORGET FOR THE REST OF YOUR *UGLY MEANINGLESS LIFE!*
YEOHHHHHHHH

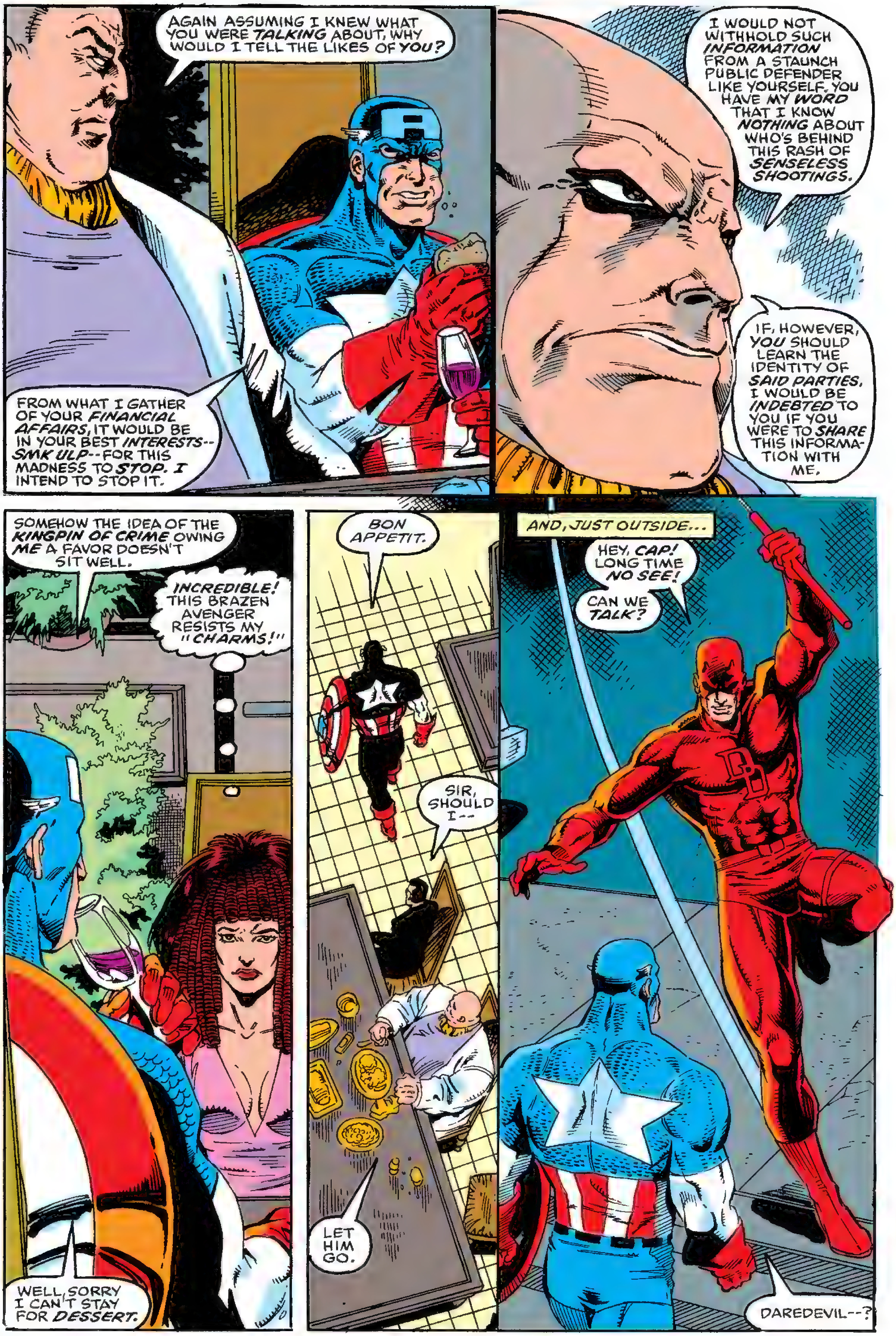

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, MAN?!? CAPTAIN AMERICA DON'T ACT LIKE THIS!
DON'T YOU DARE TELL ME HOW I'M SUPPOSED TO ACT, SCUM!
S-S-SORRY, MAN.
APOLOGY ACCEPTED. NOW LET'S SEE... WHAT WAS IT WE WERE GOING TO TALK ABOUT?
I-I DUNNO.
WELL, I SURE HOPE I THINK OF IT SOON, BECAUSE AS STRONG AS I AM, MR. JERKWEED, MY ARM IS GETTING A LITTLE TIRED.
D-DON'T DROP ME, MAN!!!
FOR ANY PARTICULAR REASON?
I'LL--I'LL DO ANYTHING YOU SAY!
THAT IS A GOOD REASON. OKAY, I'LL TAKE YOU UP ON IT. I'D LIKE TO KNOW EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT A CERTAIN BUSINESS ASSOCIATE OF YOURS...
...A MR. FISK...
ELSEWHERE...
YO, CHUCKIE-- WAS WE DEF OR WHAT? HOW MANY CRACKERJACKS YA THINK WE COLD-SMOKED T'NIGHT?
SKREET
THREE DRIVE-BYS ...PROB'LY FIVE EACH TIME, HOMES.
AWRIIITE! THAT'S TWELVE LESS CRACKERJACKS PUSHIN' THEIR JUNK ON OUR STREETS!
NEWS FER YA, JOYRIDE-- YER ALGEBRA BITES.
HEY! WHADDA WE GOT HERE --SOME HOMELESS KNOCKIN' 'ROUND OUR TRASH!
YOU THERE! G'WAN! BEAT IT!
LEMME HOIST 'IM, CHUCKIE-- C'MON, PLEASE! I WAS DRIVIN' ALL NIGHT-- I DI'NT GET TA CHILL ANYONE!
OKAY, BUT USE YER KNIFE-- YER PIECE IS TOO NOISY.

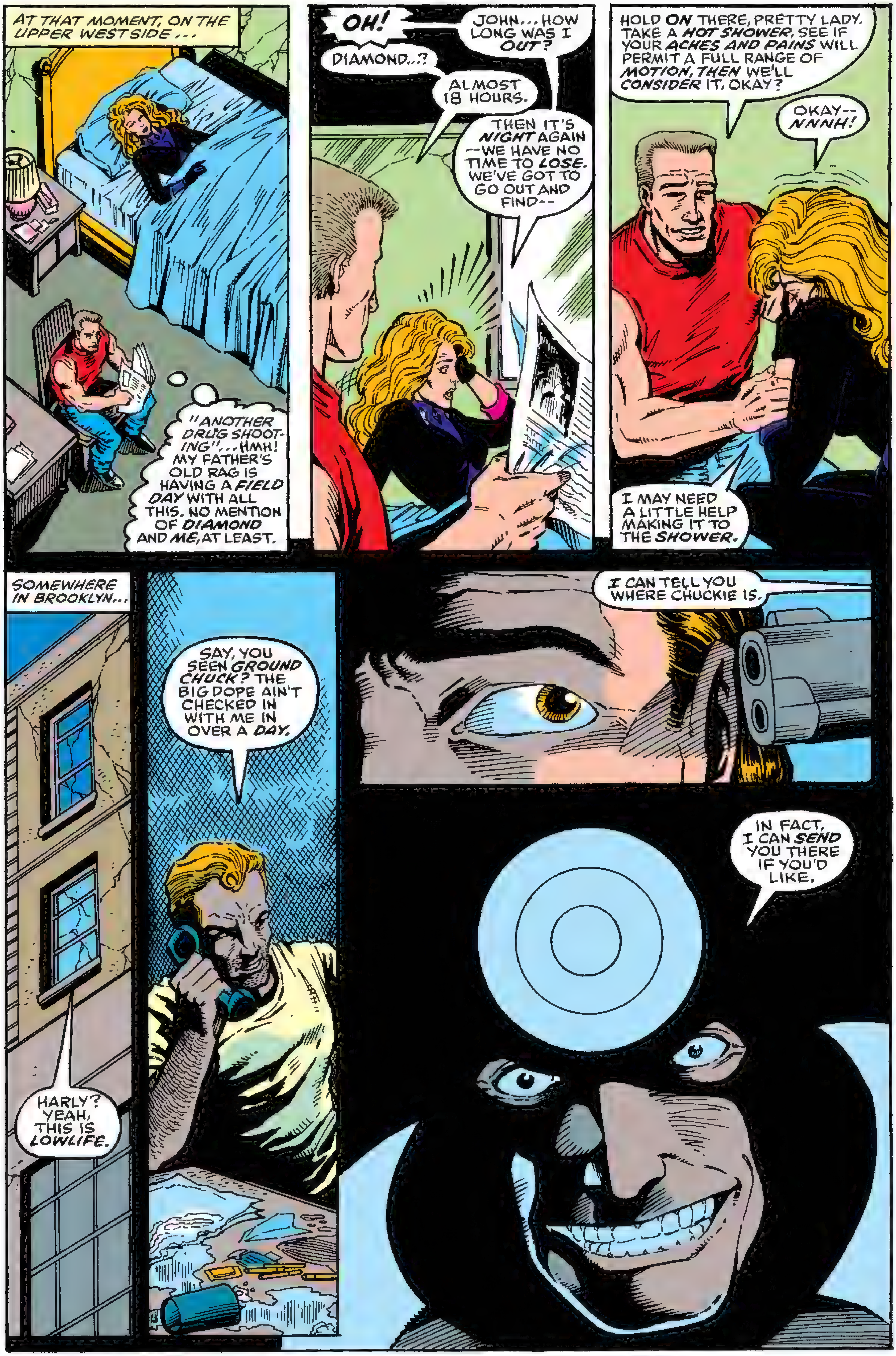

OGK!
THOG
GNK!
THOG
YOU SEE WHAT THAT FREAK DID?
YOU'RE DEAD, MAN-- YOU'RE SMOKED MEAT!
WO!
UGKKK
THONK
YOUR MOVE, BIG GUY.
MAKE ONE AND YOU'RE DEAD.
HOW 'BOUT THAT? YOU AREN'T AS DUMB AS YOU LOOK.
HMMM, WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE?
WHEW. DON'T YOU KNOW THESE THESE THINGS ARE DANGEROUS?


OKAY, CHUCKIE, YOU'RE MY CHAUFFEUR TONIGHT. YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT?
CLIC
N-NO, MAN. NO PROBLEM!
SLIDE IN. WE'RE GONNA TAKE A LITTLE RIDE, GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER A LITTLE BETTER. SOUND LIKE FUN TO YOU?
YEAH, WHATEVER YOU SAY, MAN.
A GROUND RULE BEFORE WE BEGIN. I WANT YOU TO KEEP BOTH HANDS ON THE WHEEL AT ALL TIMES. YOU SO MUCH AS TRY AND SCRATCH YOUR NOSE, I'M GONNA SEE DAYLIGHT THROUGH YOUR EARS, DIG?
I DIG YOU, MAN.
OKAY, CHUCKIE--LET'S ROLL.
NICE SET OF WHEELS. STOLEN, HUH?
NOT THAT I'M PARTICULAR. JUST MAKING CONVERSATION.
NOW THEN, ACCORDING TO SOME FOLKS YOU KNOW THAT YOU'LL NEVER SEE AGAIN, YOU'RE MANAGEMENT LEVEL IN THIS NEW OUTFIT DISTRIBUTING ICE IN THIS TOWN.
PERSONALLY, I DON'T CARE ABOUT MANAGEMENT. I CARE ABOUT THE MONEYMEN WHO HIRE MANAGEMENT.
WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO IS MAKE LIKE A CANARY, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN, OR ELSE SINGING SOPRANO IS GOING TO BE THE LEAST OF YOUR PROBLEMS.
I'LL--ULP--TELL YOU WHAT I KNOW, MAN!

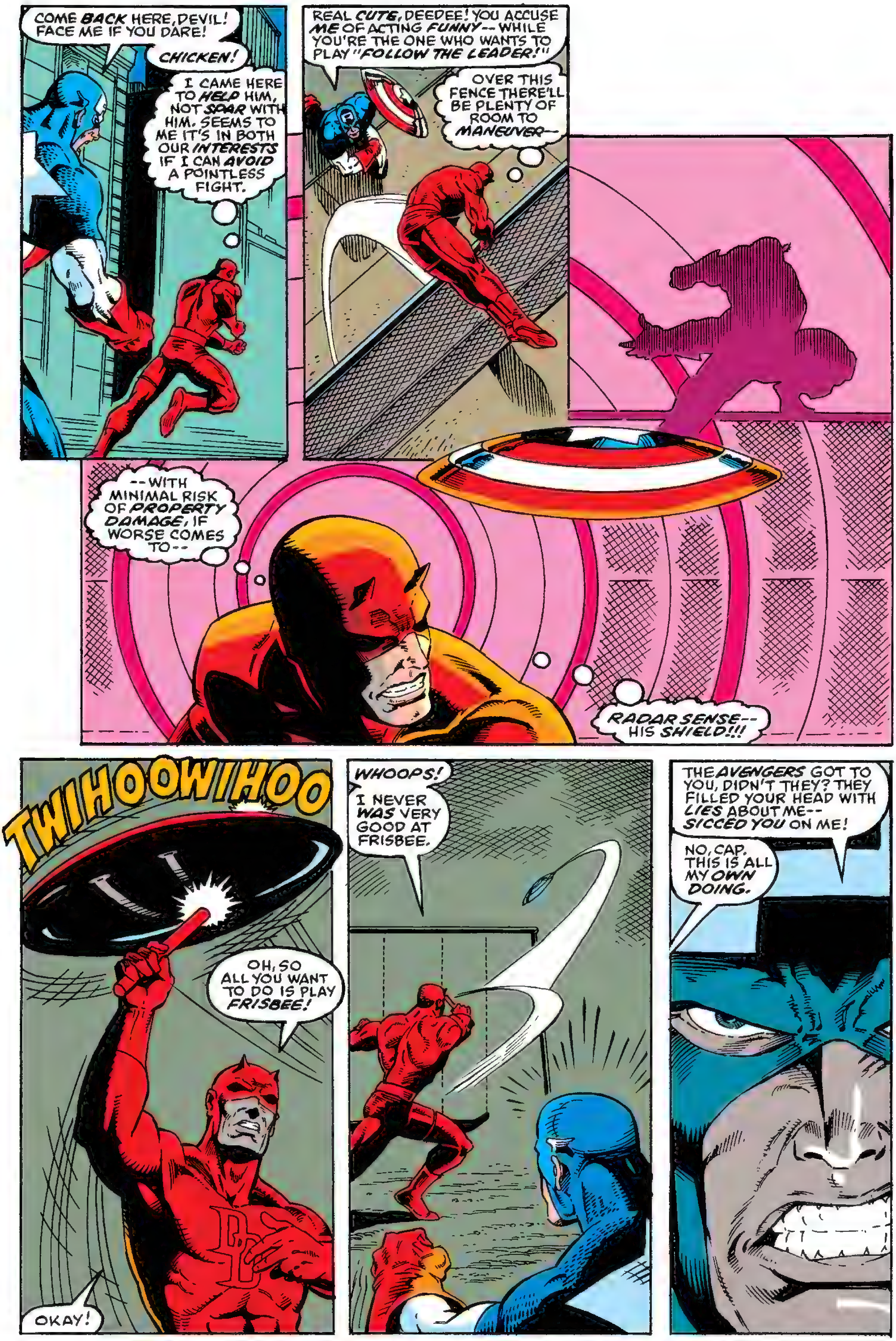

THE NEXT NIGHT.
SOMEWHERE IN THE LITTLE ITALY DISTRICT, THERE IS A RESTAURANT SO EXCLUSIVE THAT BUT A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE IN NEW YORK EVEN KNOWS IT EXISTS...
WILSON FISK IS ONE OF THEM.
AND WHEN MR. FISK GRACES THE ESTABLISHMENT WITH HIS PRESENCE, ALL OTHER CUSTOMERS ARE POLITELY SHOWN THE DOOR.
WAITER, MORE POTATOES.
RIGHT AWAY, SIR!
I FINALLY HEARD FROM BULLSEYE THIS MORNING, MARY. HE CLAIMS TO BE MAKING PROGRESS IN HIS INVESTIGATION OF THE PARTIES MUSCLING THEIR WAY INTO MY NARCOTICS TRADE.
I'LL BELIEVE THAT WHEN I SEE IT.
IF HE CAN UNEARTH ANYTHING MY USUAL SOURCES CANNOT, ALL THE MORE POWER TO HIM. IN THE MEANTIME, HE IS OUT OF THE WAY.
I HEAR THE PASTA PRIMAVERA IS OVERCOOKED HERE, KINGPIN. WHAT DO YOU THINK?
GO AHEAD, BOYS. GIVE ME AN EXCUSE.
REMAIN SEATED.

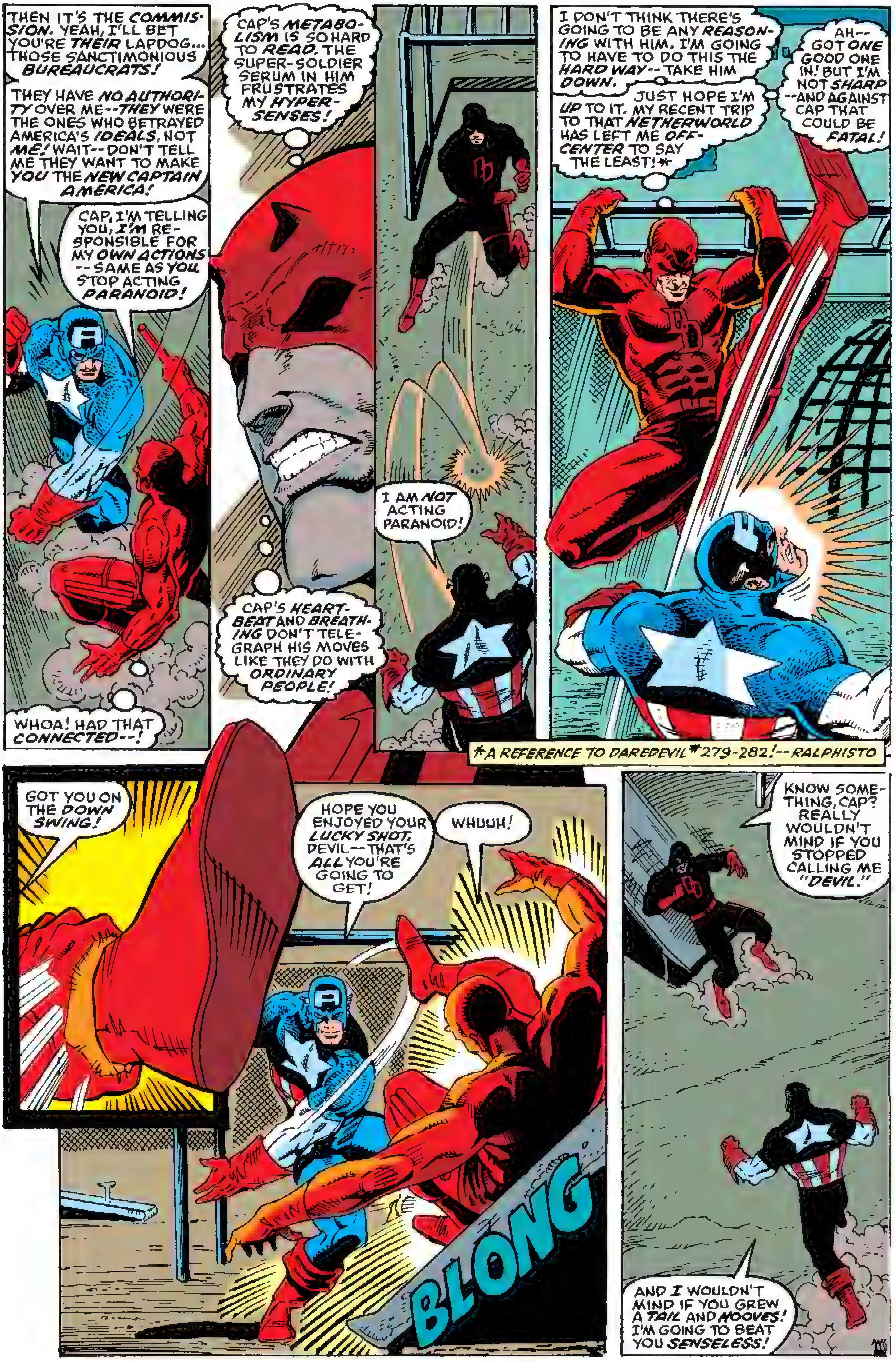

NOT TO *CONTRADICT* YOU, KINGPIN, BUT *I'D* LIKE TO SIT HERE. THAT IS--
NNNH!
--IF GUIDO HERE DOESN'T *MIND.*
TH-THINK HE DIS-LOCATED MY *SHOULDER!*
I'M TOLD *YOU'RE* THE MAN TO SEE, KINGPIN.
IT DEPENDS WHAT I AM TO BE SEEN *ABOUT,* CAPTAIN.
THE BIG *DRUG WAR* GOING ON... THE REIGN OF *TERROR* IN THE STREETS.
WHAT'S *WRONG,* KINGPIN? CAN'T YOU KEEP YOUR TROOPS *IN LINE* ANYMORE?
ASSUMING A LEGITIMATE BUSINESSMAN SUCH AS MYSELF KNEW WHAT YOU WERE *TALKING* ABOUT, WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT THIS IS SOME SORT OF *INTRAMURAL SQUABBLE?*
WHY DOES IT NOT OCCUR TO YOU THAT THIS MAY BE A *TURF WAR,* WITH *OUTSIDERS* ENCROACHING UPON *INSIDERS' TERRITORIES.*
AND WHO-- *SMK SMK*--MIGHT THESE *OUTSIDERS* BE WORKING FOR?

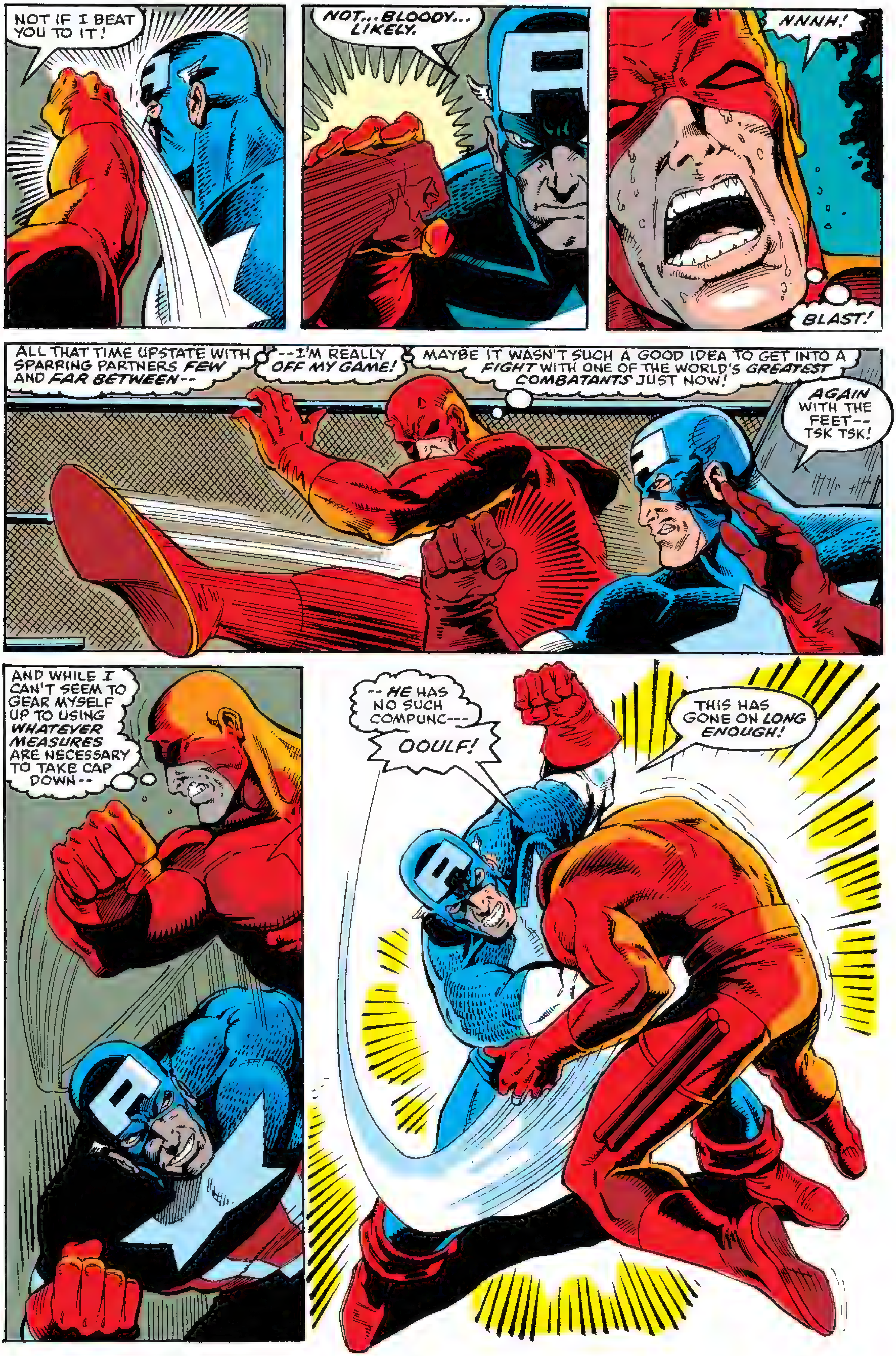

AGAIN ASSUMING I KNEW WHAT YOU WERE *TALKING* ABOUT, WHY WOULD I TELL THE LIKES OF *YOU?*
FROM WHAT I GATHER OF YOUR *FINANCIAL AFFAIRS*, IT WOULD BE IN YOUR BEST *INTERESTS*-- *SMK ULP*--FOR THIS MADNESS TO *STOP. I* INTEND TO STOP IT.
I WOULD NOT WITHHOLD SUCH *INFORMATION* FROM A STAUNCH PUBLIC DEFENDER LIKE YOURSELF. YOU HAVE *MY WORD* THAT I KNOW *NOTHING* ABOUT WHO'S BEHIND THIS RASH OF *SENSELESS SHOOTINGS.*
IF, HOWEVER, *YOU* SHOULD LEARN THE IDENTITY OF *SAID PARTIES*, I WOULD BE *INDEBTED* TO YOU IF YOU WERE TO *SHARE* THIS INFORMATION WITH ME.
SOMEHOW THE IDEA OF THE *KINGPIN OF CRIME* OWING *ME* A FAVOR DOESN'T SIT WELL.
INCREDIBLE! THIS BRAZEN AVENGER RESISTS MY *"CHARMS!"*
WELL, SORRY I CAN'T STAY FOR *DESSERT.*
BON APPETIT.
SIR, SHOULD I--
LET HIM GO.
AND, JUST OUTSIDE...
HEY, *CAP!* LONG TIME *NO SEE!*
CAN WE *TALK?*
DD
DAREDEVIL--?

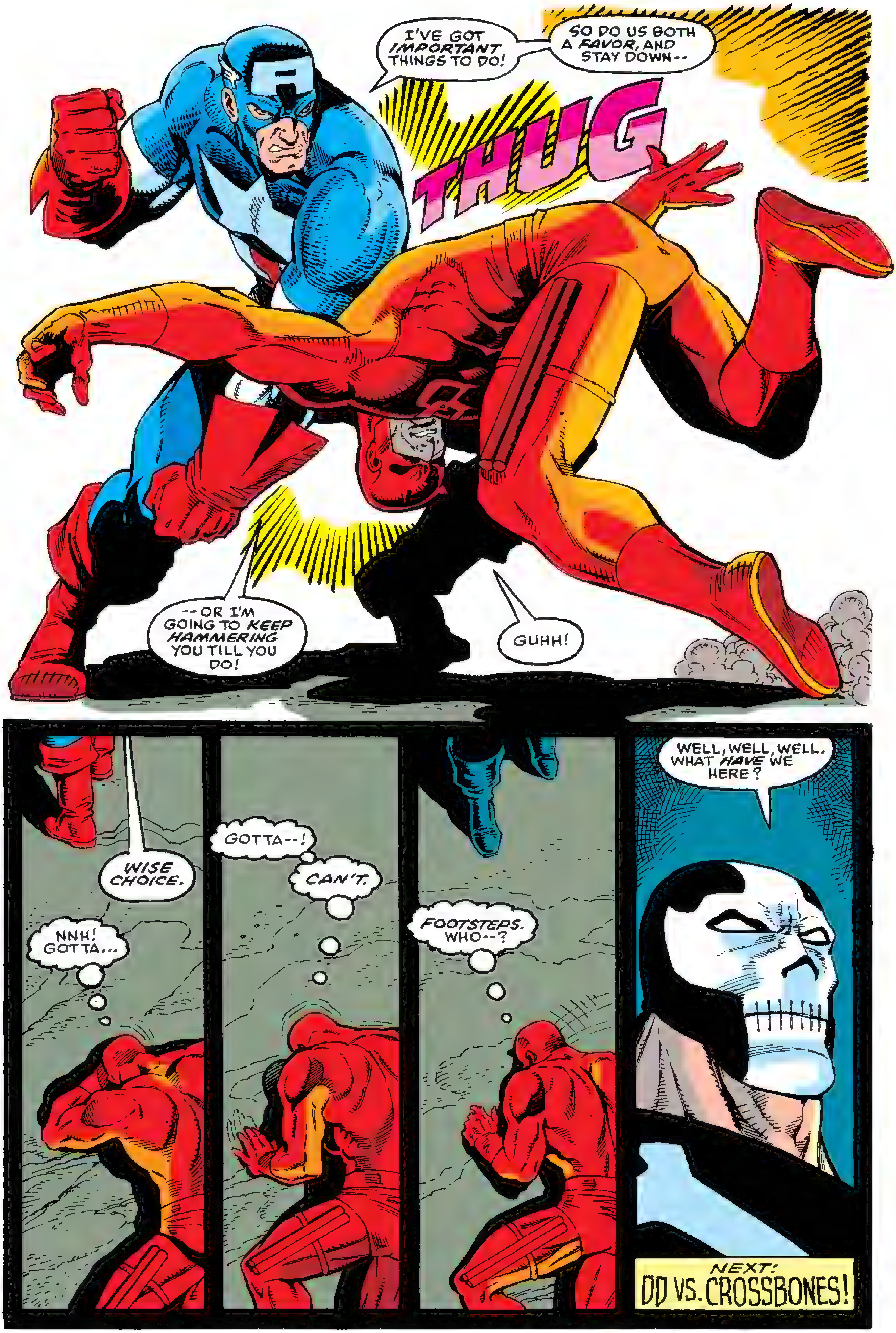

AT THAT MOMENT, ON THE UPPER WESTSIDE...
"ANOTHER DRUG SHOOTING"... HMH! MY FATHER'S OLD RAG IS HAVING A FIELD DAY WITH ALL THIS. NO MENTION OF DIAMOND AND ME, AT LEAST.
OH!
DIAMOND..?
JOHN... HOW LONG WAS I OUT?
ALMOST 18 HOURS.
THEN IT'S NIGHT AGAIN --WE HAVE NO TIME TO LOSE. WE'VE GOT TO GO OUT AND FIND--
HOLD ON THERE, PRETTY LADY. TAKE A HOT SHOWER, SEE IF YOUR ACHES AND PAINS WILL PERMIT A FULL RANGE OF MOTION, THEN WE'LL CONSIDER IT, OKAY?
OKAY-- NNNH!
I MAY NEED A LITTLE HELP MAKING IT TO THE SHOWER.
SOMEWHERE IN BROOKLYN...
HARLY? YEAH, THIS IS LOWLIFE.
SAY, YOU SEEN GROUND CHUCK? THE BIG DOPE AIN'T CHECKED IN WITH ME IN OVER A DAY.
I CAN TELL YOU WHERE CHUCKIE IS.
IN FACT, I CAN SEND YOU THERE IF YOU'D LIKE.

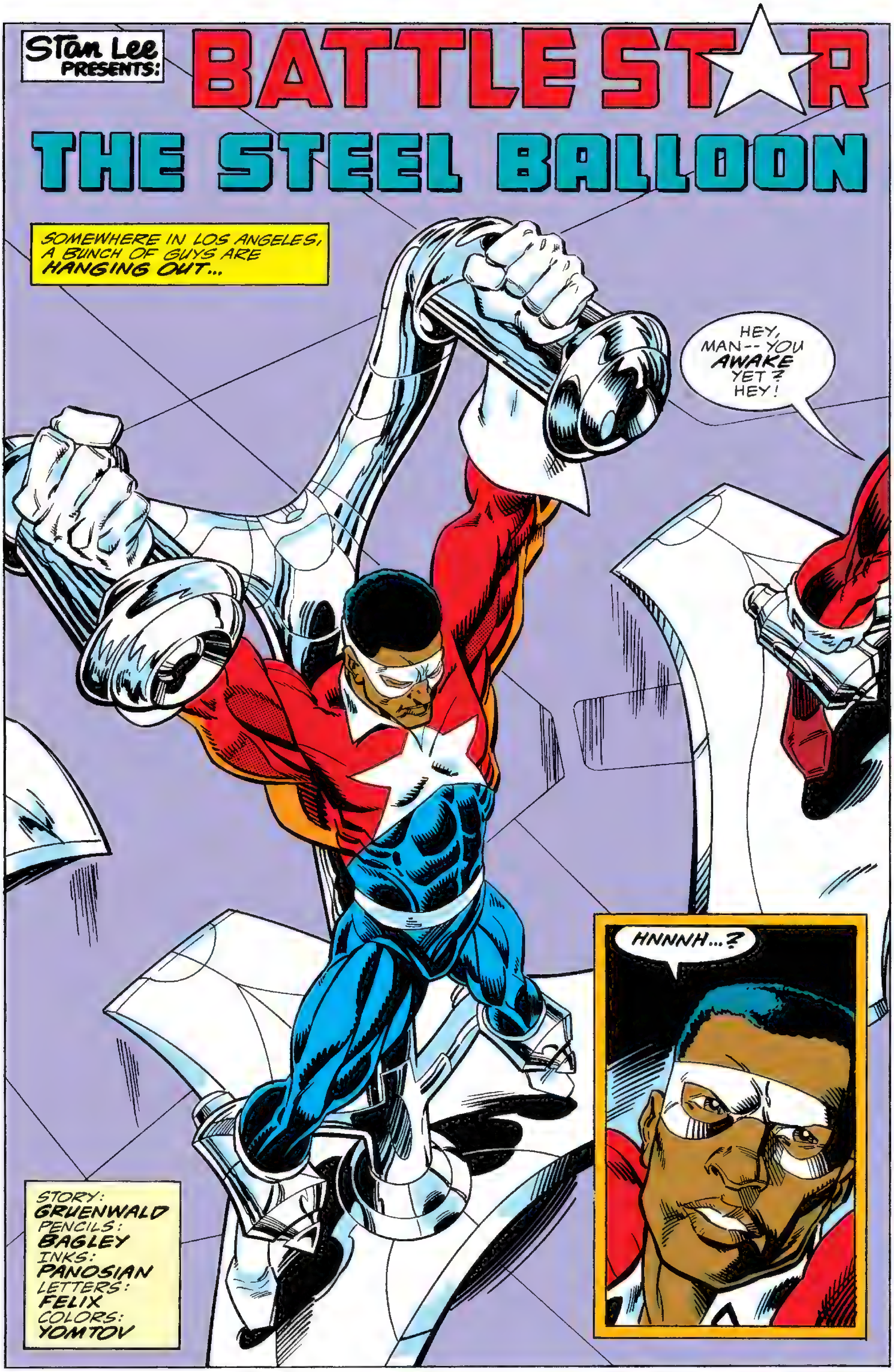
LITTLE ITALY...
WHAT THE *DEVIL* ARE YOU DOING HERE?
LOOKING FOR *YOU.* WHEN WE RAN INTO EACH OTHER *UPSTATE* A FEW DAYS AGO, YOU SEEMED *UPSET... OVERWROUGHT...**
*DAREDEVIL #283. --R
SINCE MY RETURN TO THE *CITY,* I'VE BEEN HEARING RUMORS OF YOUR INCREASINGLY *RECKLESS BEHAVIOR.* I SUSPECT THERE'S SOMETHING THE *MATTER* WITH YOU, FRIEND.
I'VE COME TO SEE TO IT YOU GET *HELP* BEFORE YOU DO SOMETHING YOU'LL *REGRET.*
YOUR CONCERN IS *TOUCHING,* BUT I'M PERFECTLY *FINE.* IN FACT, I HAVEN'T FELT *THIS ALIVE* IN YEARS.
SO HOW ABOUT YOU TAKE YOUR HAND OFF ME AND LET ME *DO MY JOB?*
MY *WRIST--*
--HE'S GOING TO *BREAK IT!* UNLESS--
SORRY, CAP. YOU DIDN'T GIVE ME A LOT OF *CHOICE.*
SO THE LITTLE DEVIL WANTS TO *FIGHT,* EH?
THEN LET'S!
WHSSH
WHEW! NEARLY TOOK MY *HEAD* OFF!
AS IF I NEEDED ANY *MORE* EVIDENCE THAT CAP'S GONE NUTS!

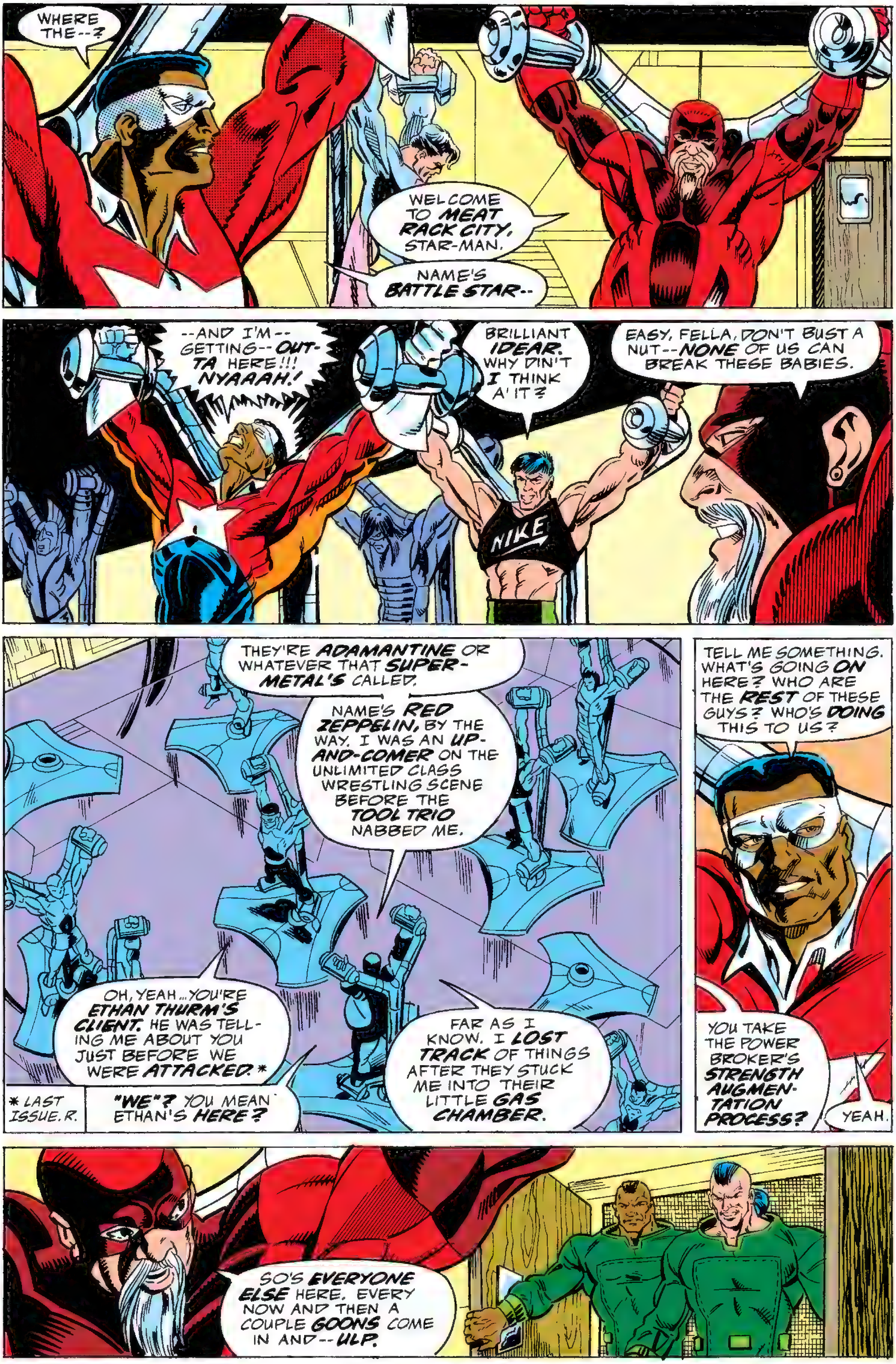

COME BACK HERE, DEVIL! FACE ME IF YOU DARE!
CHICKEN!
I CAME HERE TO HELP HIM, NOT SPAR WITH HIM. SEEMS TO ME IT'S IN BOTH OUR INTERESTS IF I CAN AVOID A POINTLESS FIGHT.
REAL CUTE, DEEDEE! YOU ACCUSE ME OF ACTING FUNNY-- WHILE YOU'RE THE ONE WHO WANTS TO PLAY "FOLLOW THE LEADER!"
OVER THIS FENCE THERE'LL BE PLENTY OF ROOM TO MANEUVER--
--WITH MINIMAL RISK OF PROPERTY DAMAGE, IF WORSE COMES TO--
RADAR SENSE-- HIS SHIELD!!!
TWIHOOWIHOO
OH, SO ALL YOU WANT TO DO IS PLAY FRISBEE!
OKAY!
WHOOPS! I NEVER WAS VERY GOOD AT FRISBEE.
THE AVENGERS GOT TO YOU, DIDN'T THEY? THEY FILLED YOUR HEAD WITH LIES ABOUT ME-- SICCED YOU ON ME!
NO, CAP. THIS IS ALL MY OWN DOING.

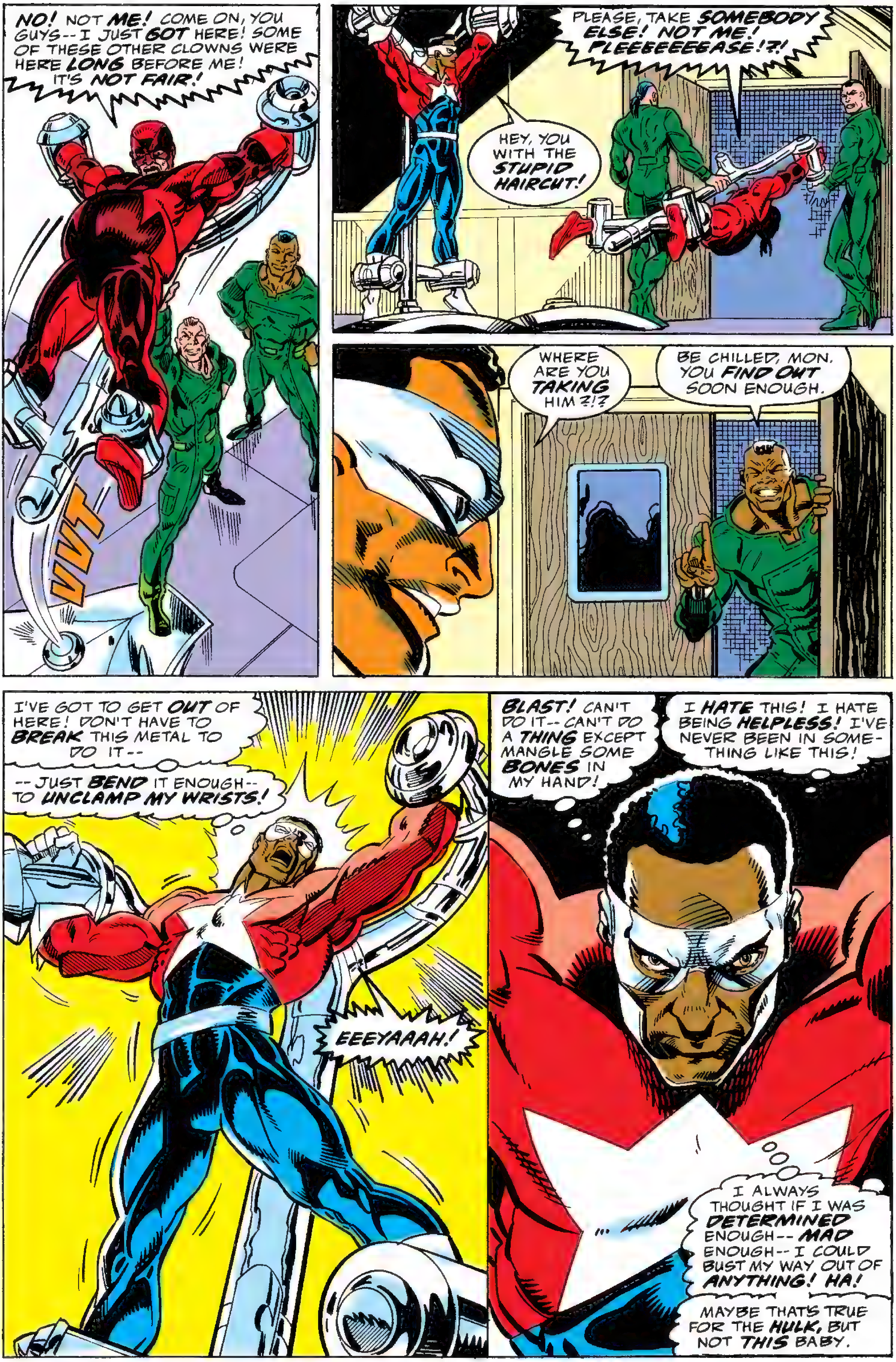

THEN IT'S THE *COMMISSION.* YEAH, I'LL BET YOU'RE *THEIR* LAPDOG... THOSE SANCTIMONIOUS *BUREAUCRATS!*
THEY HAVE *NO AUTHORITY* OVER ME--*THEY* WERE THE ONES WHO BETRAYED AMERICA'S *IDEALS*, NOT *ME!* WAIT--DON'T TELL ME THEY WANT TO MAKE *YOU* THE *NEW CAPTAIN AMERICA!*
CAP, I'M TELLING YOU, *I'M* RESPONSIBLE FOR MY *OWN ACTIONS* --SAME AS *YOU.* STOP ACTING *PARANOID!*
WHOA! HAD THAT *CONNECTED*--!
CAP'S *METABOLISM* IS SO HARD TO *READ.* THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM IN HIM FRUSTRATES MY *HYPER-SENSES!*
CAP'S *HEARTBEAT* AND *BREATHING* DON'T TELEGRAPH HIS MOVES LIKE THEY DO WITH *ORDINARY PEOPLE!*
I AM *NOT* ACTING PARANOID!
I DON'T THINK THERE'S GOING TO BE ANY *REASONING* WITH HIM. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO DO THIS THE *HARD WAY*--TAKE HIM *DOWN.*
JUST HOPE I'M *UP* TO IT. MY RECENT TRIP TO THAT *NETHERWORLD* HAS LEFT ME *OFF-CENTER* TO SAY THE LEAST!*
AH--GOT *ONE GOOD ONE* IN! BUT I'M NOT *SHARP* --AND AGAINST CAP THAT COULD BE *FATAL!*
*A REFERENCE TO DAREDEVIL #279-282!--RALPHISTO
GOT YOU ON THE *DOWN SWING!*
HOPE YOU ENJOYED YOUR *LUCKY SHOT,* DEVIL--THAT'S *ALL* YOU'RE GOING TO GET!
WHUUH!
BLONG
KNOW SOMETHING, CAP? REALLY WOULDN'T MIND IF YOU STOPPED CALLING ME *"DEVIL."*
AND *I* WOULDN'T MIND IF YOU GREW A *TAIL* AND *HOOVES!* I'M GOING TO BEAT YOU *SENSELESS!*

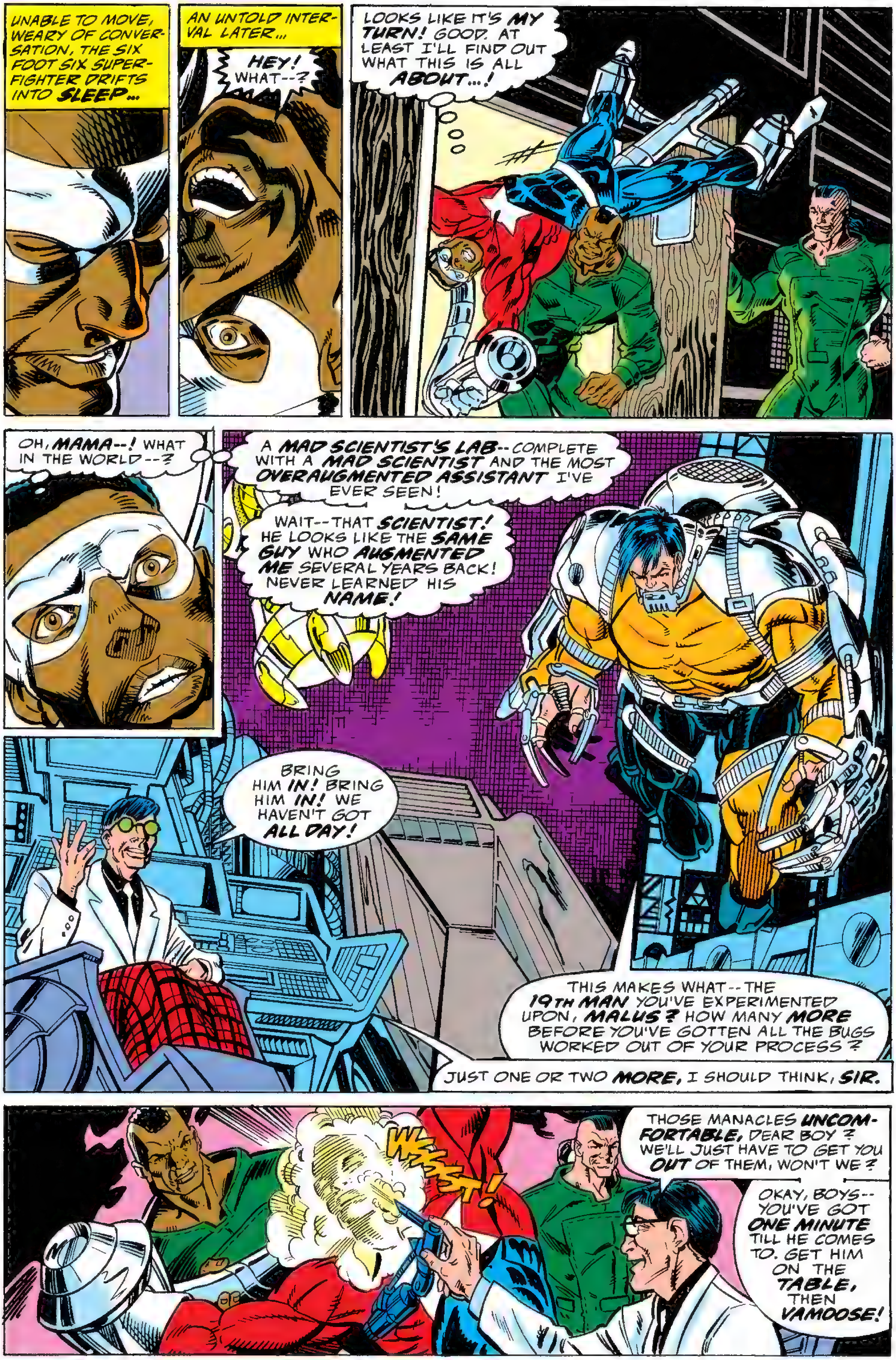

NOT IF I BEAT YOU TO IT!
NOT... BLOODY... LIKELY.
NNNH!
BLAST!
ALL THAT TIME UPSTATE WITH SPARRING PARTNERS FEW AND FAR BETWEEN--
--I'M REALLY OFF MY GAME!
MAYBE IT WASN'T SUCH A GOOD IDEA TO GET INTO A FIGHT WITH ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMBATANTS JUST NOW!
AGAIN WITH THE FEET-- TSK TSK!
AND WHILE I CAN'T SEEM TO GEAR MYSELF UP TO USING WHATEVER MEASURES ARE NECESSARY TO TAKE CAP DOWN--
--HE HAS NO SUCH COMPUNC---
OOULF!
THIS HAS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH!

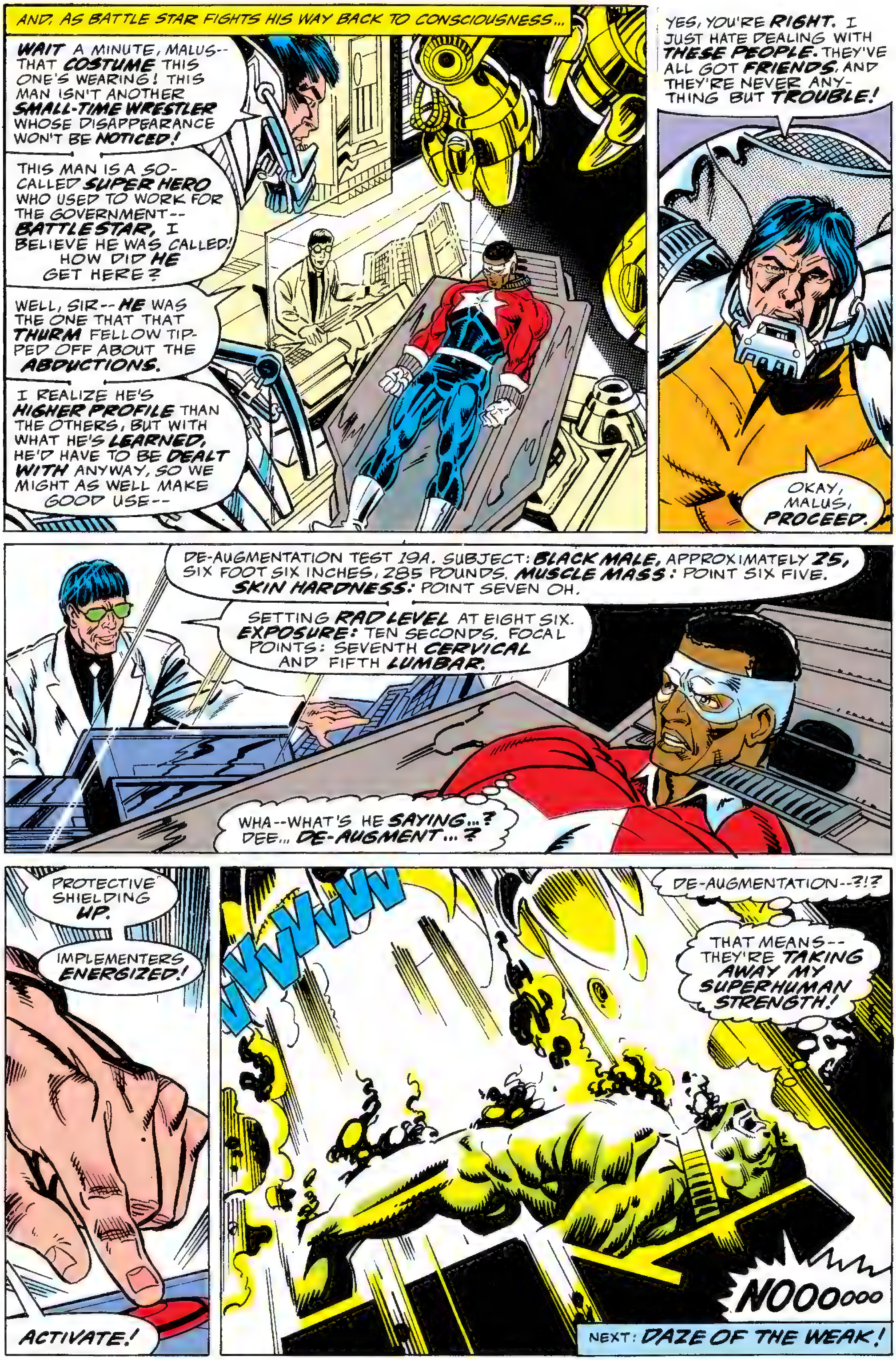

I'VE GOT *IMPORTANT* THINGS TO DO!
SO DO US BOTH A *FAVOR*, AND STAY DOWN--
THUG
--OR I'M GOING TO *KEEP HAMMERING* YOU TILL YOU DO!
GUHH!
WISE CHOICE.
NNH! GOTTA...
GOTTA--!
CAN'T.
FOOTSTEPS. WHO--?
WELL, WELL, WELL. WHAT *HAVE* WE HERE?
NEXT: DD VS. CROSSBONES!


Stan Lee PRESENTS:
BATTLESTAR
THE STEEL BALLOON
SOMEWHERE IN LOS ANGELES, A BUNCH OF GUYS ARE HANGING OUT...
HEY, MAN-- YOU AWAKE YET? HEY!
HNNNH...?
STORY: GRUENWALD
PENCILS: BAGLEY
INKS: PANOSIAN
LETTERS: FELIX
COLORS: YOMTOV


WHERE THE--?
WELCOME TO MEAT RACK CITY, STAR-MAN.
NAME'S BATTLE STAR--
--AND I'M-- GETTING-- OUTTA HERE!!! NYAAAAH!
BRILLIANT IDEAR. WHY DIN'T I THINK A' IT?
EASY, FELLA, DON'T BUST A NUT--NONE OF US CAN BREAK THESE BABIES.
NIKE
THEY'RE ADAMANTINE OR WHATEVER THAT SUPER-METAL'S CALLED.
NAME'S RED ZEPPELIN, BY THE WAY. I WAS AN UP-AND-COMER ON THE UNLIMITED CLASS WRESTLING SCENE BEFORE THE TOOL TRIO NABBED ME.
OH, YEAH...YOU'RE ETHAN THURM'S CLIENT. HE WAS TELLING ME ABOUT YOU JUST BEFORE WE WERE ATTACKED.*
* LAST ISSUE. R.
"WE"? YOU MEAN ETHAN'S HERE?
FAR AS I KNOW. I LOST TRACK OF THINGS AFTER THEY STUCK ME INTO THEIR LITTLE GAS CHAMBER.
TELL ME SOMETHING. WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? WHO ARE THE REST OF THESE GUYS? WHO'S DOING THIS TO US?
YOU TAKE THE POWER BROKER'S STRENGTH AUGMENTATION PROCESS?
YEAH.
SO'S EVERYONE ELSE HERE. EVERY NOW AND THEN A COUPLE GOONS COME IN AND--ULP.


NO! NOT ME! COME ON, YOU GUYS-- I JUST GOT HERE! SOME OF THESE OTHER CLOWNS WERE HERE LONG BEFORE ME! IT'S NOT FAIR!
VVT
PLEASE, TAKE SOMEBODY ELSE! NOT ME! PLEEEEEEEASE!?!
HEY, YOU WITH THE STUPID HAIRCUT!
WHERE ARE YOU TAKING HIM?!?
BE CHILLED, MON. YOU FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH.
I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE! DON'T HAVE TO BREAK THIS METAL TO DO IT--
--JUST BEND IT ENOUGH-- TO UNCLAMP MY WRISTS!
EEEYAAAH!
BLAST! CAN'T DO IT-- CAN'T DO A THING EXCEPT MANGLE SOME BONES IN MY HAND!
I HATE THIS! I HATE BEING HELPLESS! I'VE NEVER BEEN IN SOMETHING LIKE THIS!
I ALWAYS THOUGHT IF I WAS DETERMINED ENOUGH-- MAD ENOUGH-- I COULD BUST MY WAY OUT OF ANYTHING! HA!
MAYBE THAT'S TRUE FOR THE HULK, BUT NOT THIS BABY.


UNABLE TO MOVE, WEARY OF CONVERSATION, THE SIX FOOT SIX SUPER-FIGHTER DRIFTS INTO SLEEP...
AN UNTOLD INTERVAL LATER...
HEY! WHAT--?
LOOKS LIKE IT'S MY TURN! GOOD. AT LEAST I'LL FIND OUT WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT...!
OH, MAMA--! WHAT IN THE WORLD--?
A MAD SCIENTIST'S LAB--COMPLETE WITH A MAD SCIENTIST AND THE MOST OVERAUGMENTED ASSISTANT I'VE EVER SEEN!
WAIT--THAT SCIENTIST! HE LOOKS LIKE THE SAME GUY WHO AUGMENTED ME SEVERAL YEARS BACK! NEVER LEARNED HIS NAME!
BRING HIM IN! BRING HIM IN! WE HAVEN'T GOT ALL DAY!
THIS MAKES WHAT--THE 19TH MAN YOU'VE EXPERIMENTED UPON, MALUS? HOW MANY MORE BEFORE YOU'VE GOTTEN ALL THE BUGS WORKED OUT OF YOUR PROCESS?
JUST ONE OR TWO MORE, I SHOULD THINK, SIR.
WSSST!
THOSE MANACLES UNCOMFORTABLE, DEAR BOY? WE'LL JUST HAVE TO GET YOU OUT OF THEM, WON'T WE?
OKAY, BOYS--YOU'VE GOT ONE MINUTE TILL HE COMES TO. GET HIM ON THE TABLE, THEN VAMOOSE!


AND, AS BATTLE STAR FIGHTS HIS WAY BACK TO CONSCIOUSNESS...
WAIT A MINUTE, MALUS-- THAT COSTUME THIS ONE'S WEARING! THIS MAN ISN'T ANOTHER SMALL-TIME WRESTLER WHOSE DISAPPEARANCE WON'T BE NOTICED!
THIS MAN IS A SO-CALLED SUPER HERO WHO USED TO WORK FOR THE GOVERNMENT-- BATTLESTAR, I BELIEVE HE WAS CALLED! HOW DID HE GET HERE?
WELL, SIR--HE WAS THE ONE THAT THAT THURM FELLOW TIPPED OFF ABOUT THE ABDUCTIONS.
I REALIZE HE'S HIGHER PROFILE THAN THE OTHERS, BUT WITH WHAT HE'S LEARNED, HE'D HAVE TO BE DEALT WITH ANYWAY, SO WE MIGHT AS WELL MAKE GOOD USE--
YES, YOU'RE RIGHT. I JUST HATE DEALING WITH THESE PEOPLE. THEY'VE ALL GOT FRIENDS, AND THEY'RE NEVER ANYTHING BUT TROUBLE!
OKAY, MALUS, PROCEED.
DE-AUGMENTATION TEST 19A. SUBJECT: BLACK MALE, APPROXIMATELY 25, SIX FOOT SIX INCHES, 285 POUNDS. MUSCLE MASS: POINT SIX FIVE. SKIN HARDNESS: POINT SEVEN OH.
SETTING RAD LEVEL AT EIGHT SIX. EXPOSURE: TEN SECONDS. FOCAL POINTS: SEVENTH CERVICAL AND FIFTH LUMBAR.
WHA--WHAT'S HE SAYING...? DEE... DE-AUGMENT...?
PROTECTIVE SHIELDING UP.
IMPLEMENTERS ENERGIZED!
ACTIVATE!
VVVVVVVV
DE-AUGMENTATION--?!?
THAT MEANS-- THEY'RE TAKING AWAY MY SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH!
NOOOooo
NEXT: DAZE OF THE WEAK!

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CAPTAIN AMERICA®
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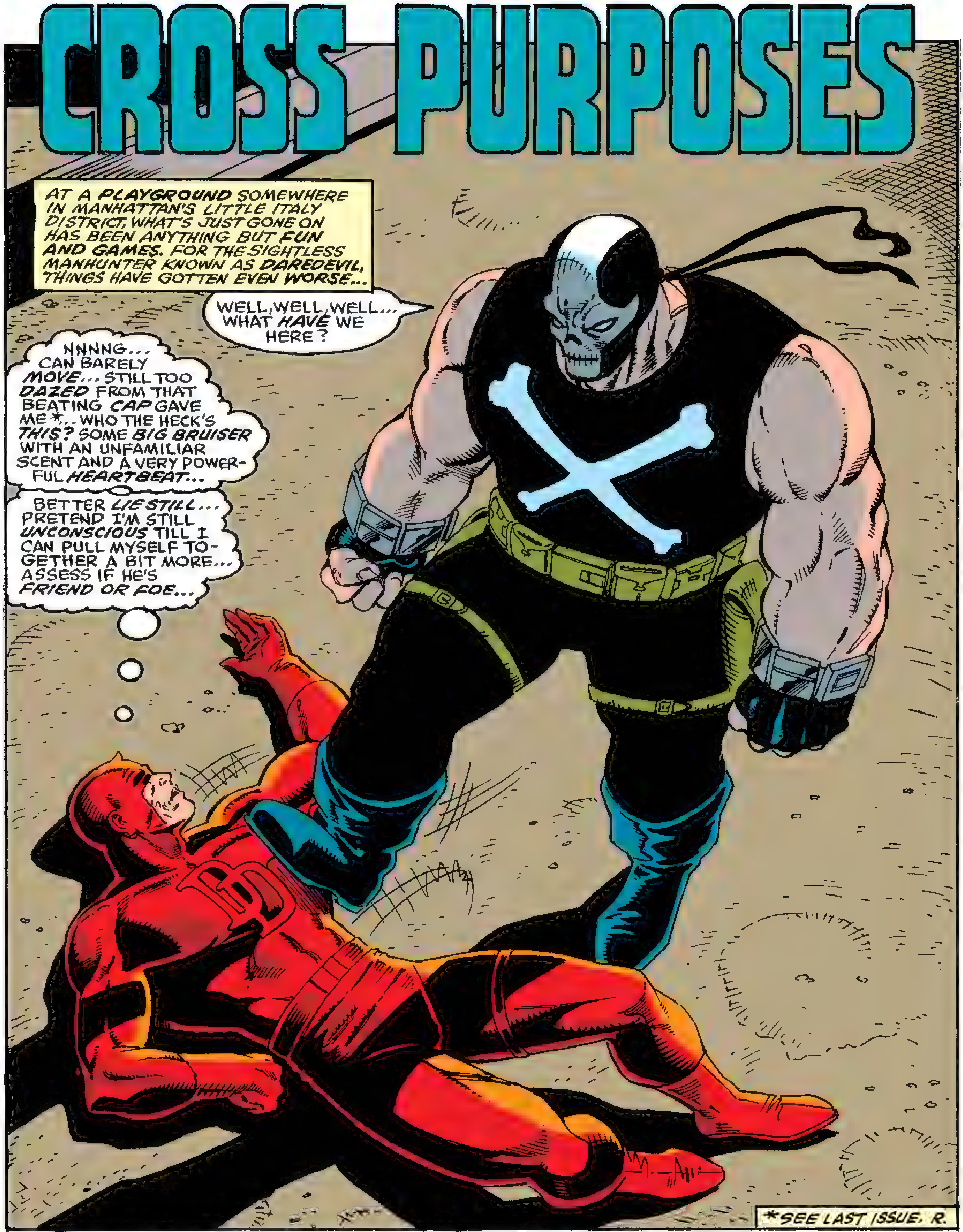
CROSS PURPOSES


AT A *PLAYGROUND* SOMEWHERE IN MANHATTAN'S LITTLE ITALY DISTRICT, WHAT'S JUST GONE ON HAS BEEN ANYTHING BUT *FUN AND GAMES.* FOR THE SIGHTLESS MANHUNTER KNOWN AS *DAREDEVIL,* THINGS HAVE GOTTEN EVEN *WORSE...*
WELL, WELL, WELL... WHAT *HAVE* WE HERE?
NNNNG... CAN BARELY *MOVE...* STILL TOO *DAZED* FROM THAT BEATING *CAP* GAVE ME*... WHO THE HECK'S *THIS?* SOME *BIG BRUISER* WITH AN UNFAMILIAR SCENT AND A VERY POWERFUL *HEARTBEAT...*
BETTER *LIE STILL...* PRETEND I'M STILL *UNCONSCIOUS* TILL I CAN PULL MYSELF TOGETHER A BIT MORE... ASSESS IF HE'S *FRIEND OR FOE...*
*SEE LAST ISSUE. R.

MARK GRUENWALD writer · RON LIM pencils · DANNY BULANADI inks · JOE ROSEN letters · STEVE BUCCELLATO colors · RALPH MACCHIO editor · TOM DEFALCO kingpin

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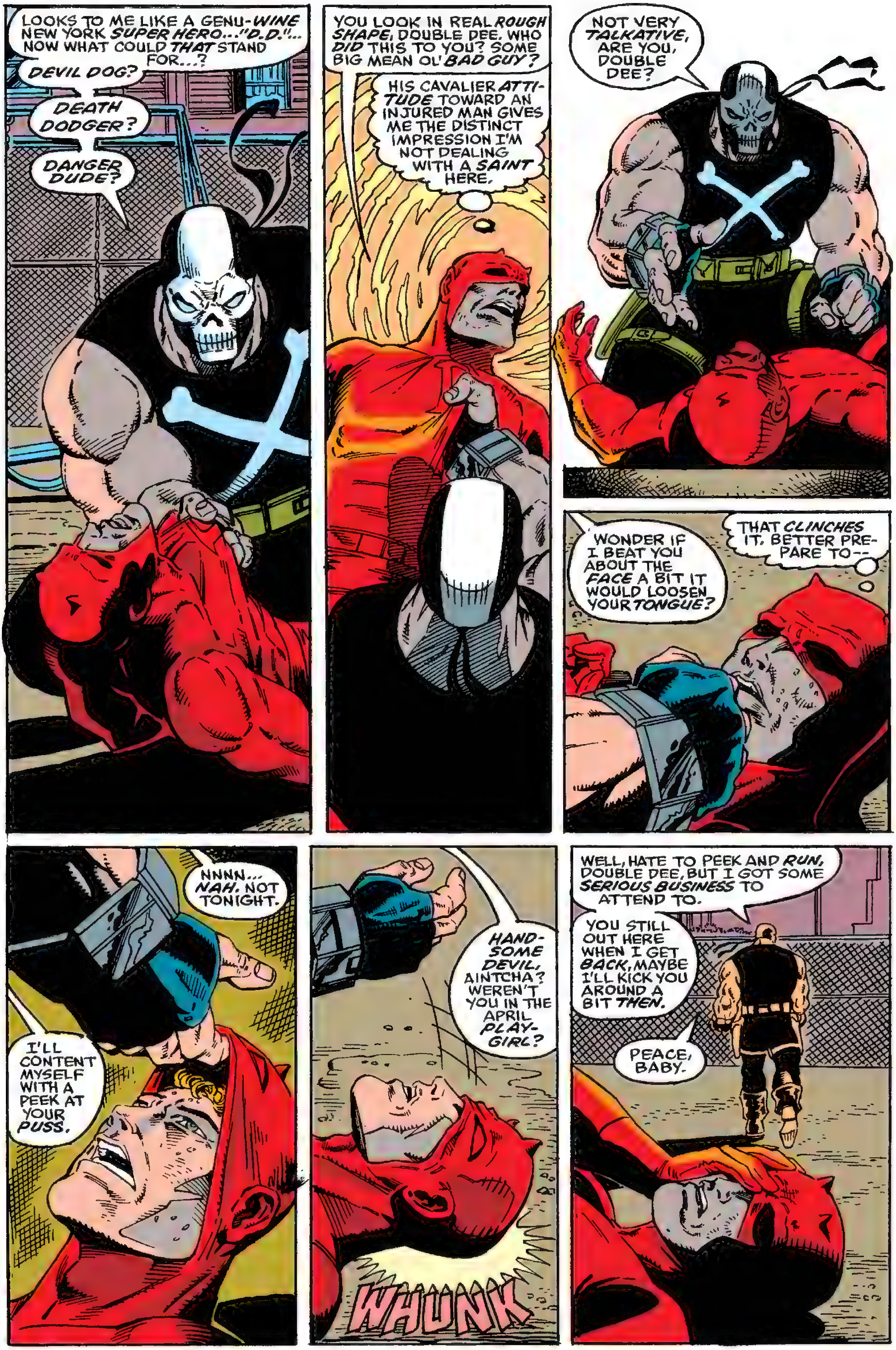
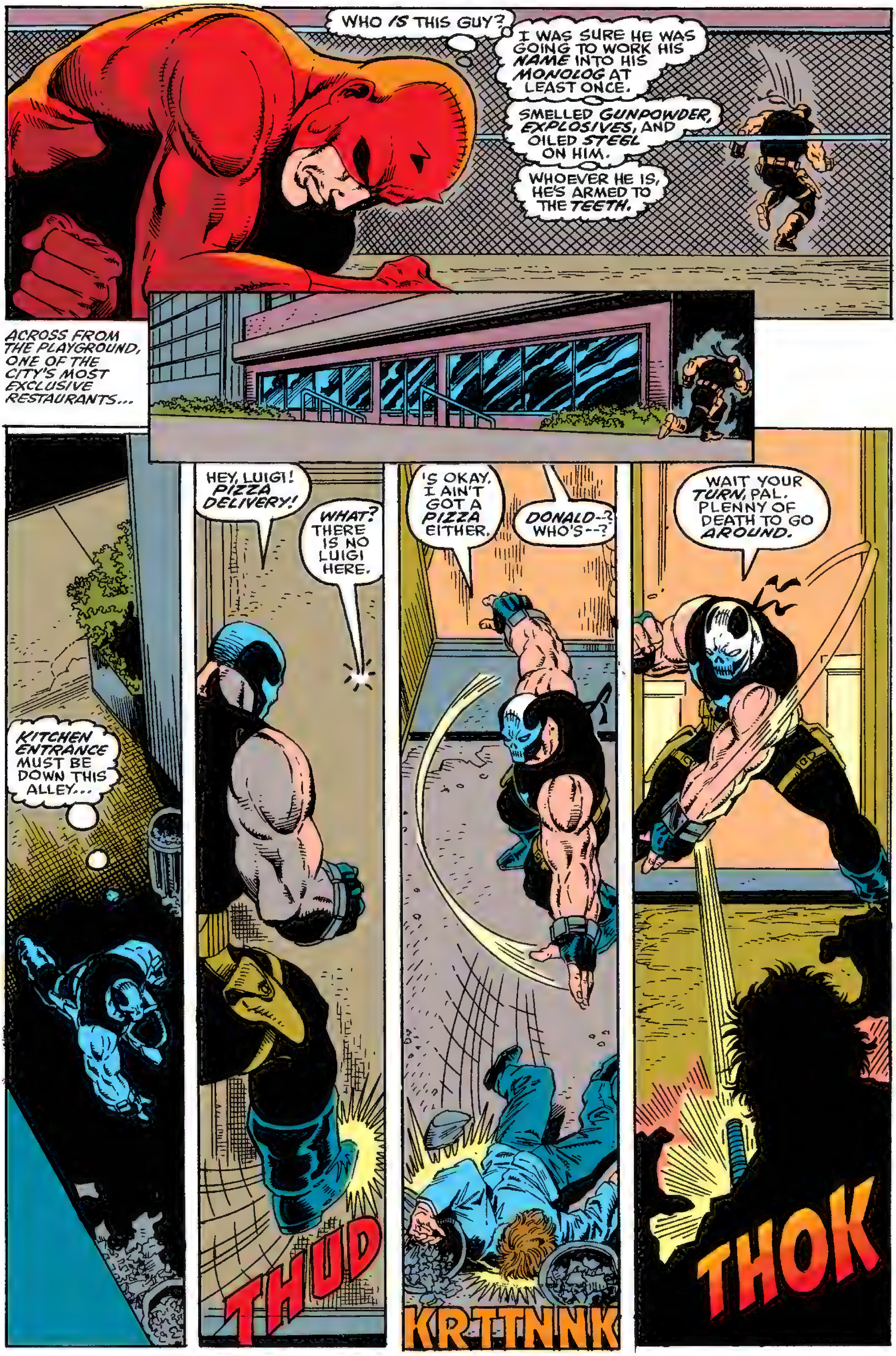
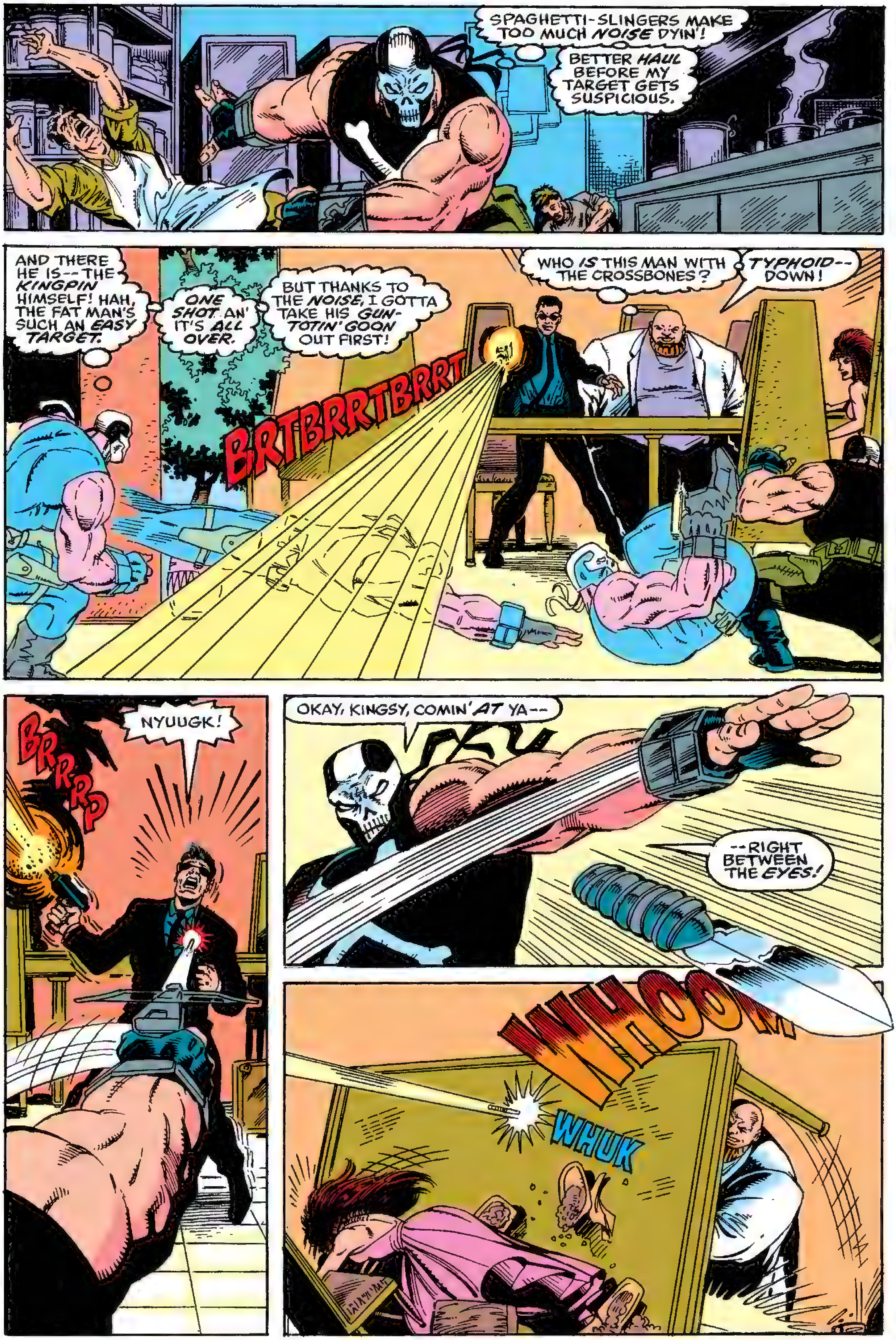
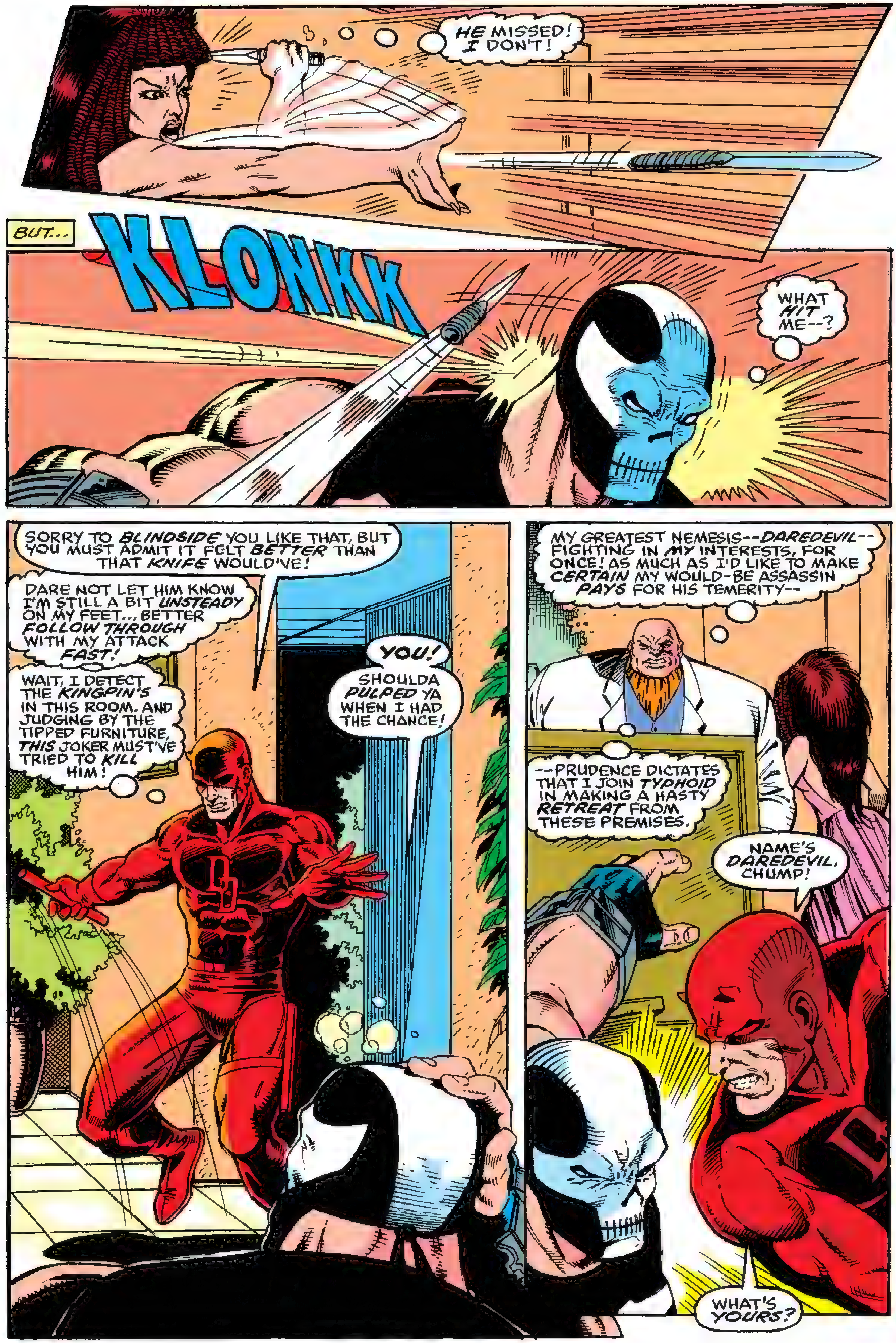
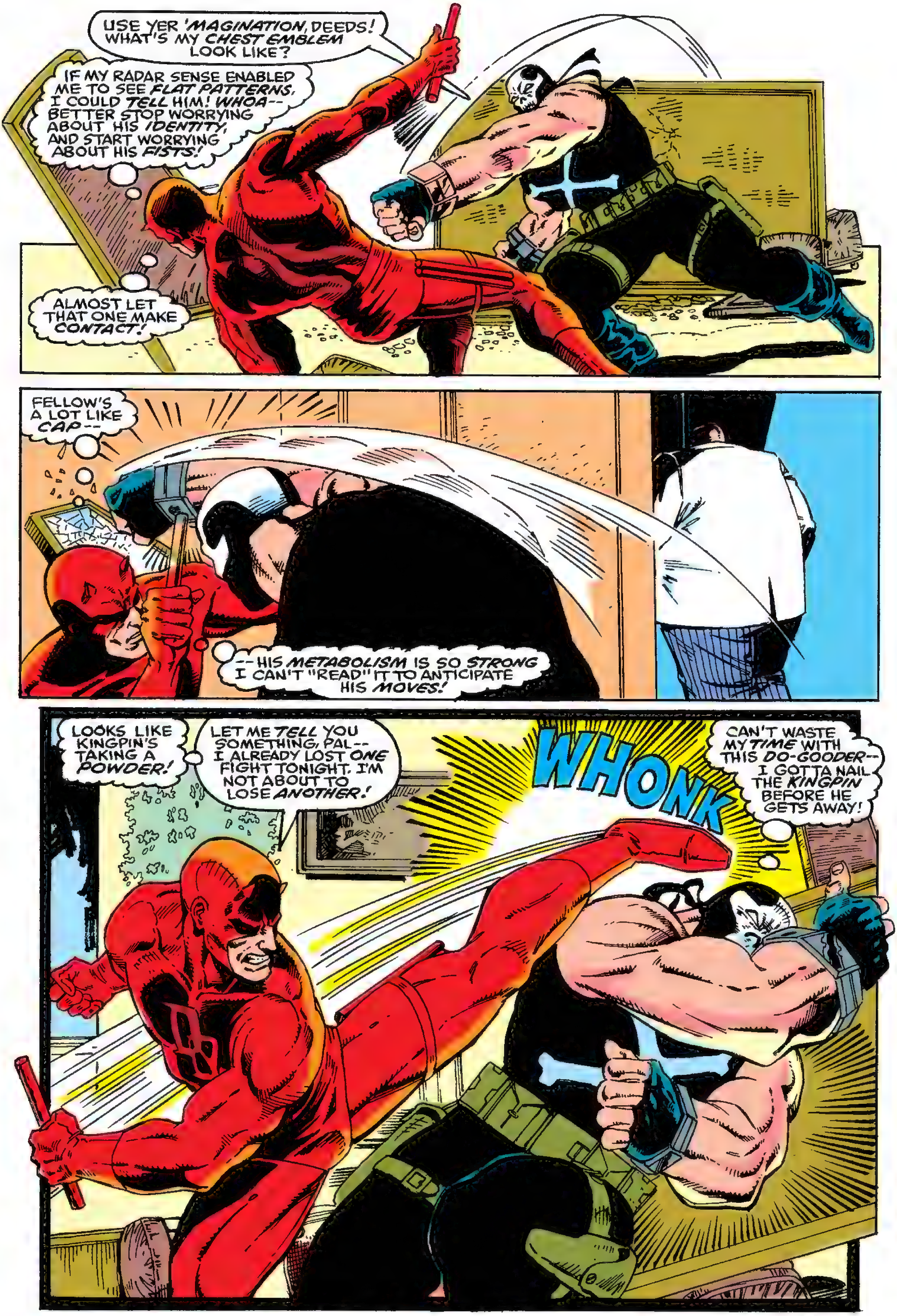
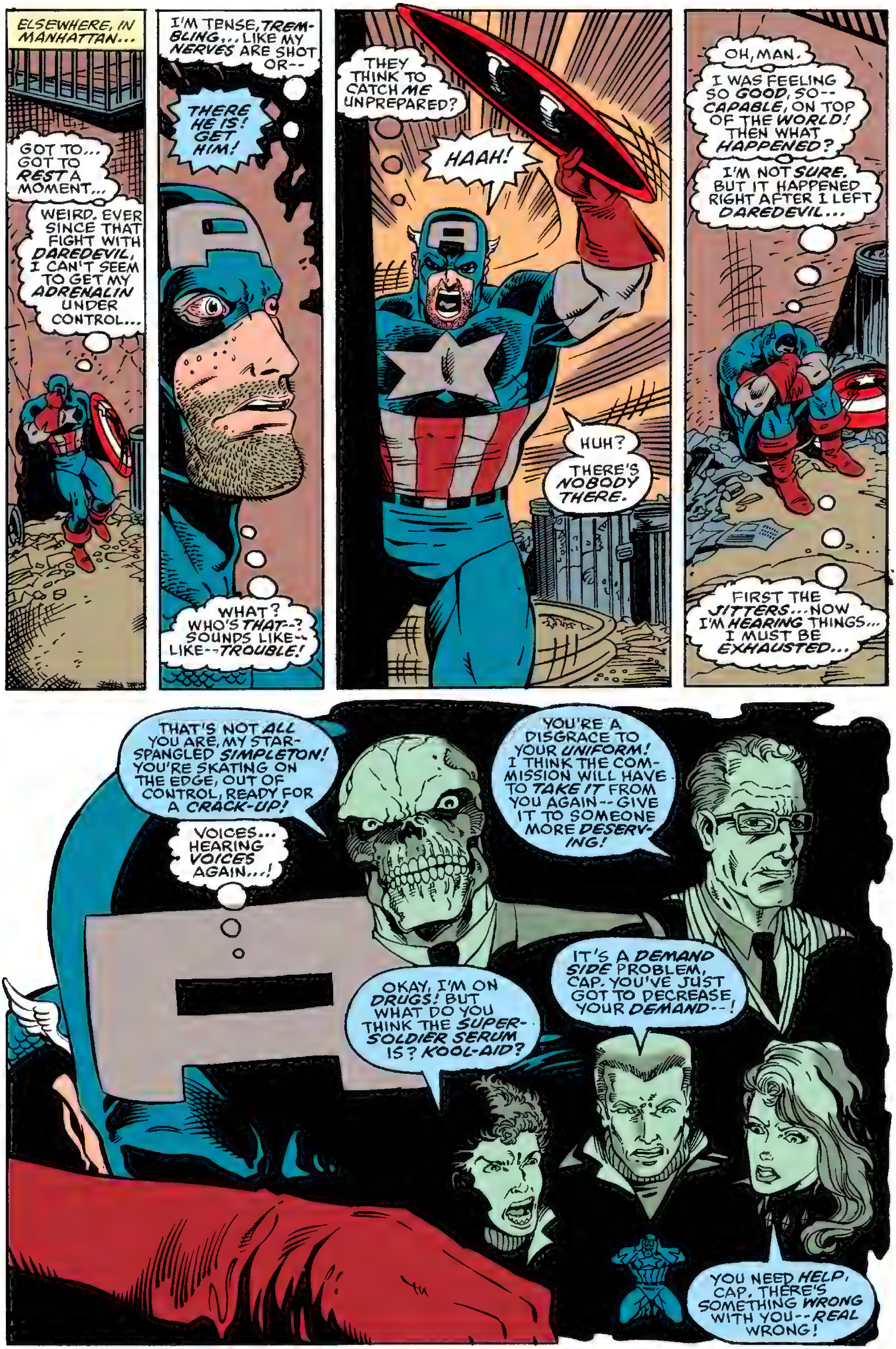

LOOKS TO ME LIKE A GENU-*WINE* NEW YORK *SUPER HERO*..."*D.D.*"... NOW WHAT COULD *THAT* STAND FOR...?
DEVIL DOG?
DEATH DODGER?
DANGER DUDE?
YOU LOOK IN REAL *ROUGH SHAPE*, DOUBLE DEE. WHO *DID* THIS TO YOU? SOME BIG MEAN OL' *BAD GUY?*
HIS CAVALIER *ATTITUDE* TOWARD AN INJURED MAN GIVES ME THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION I'M NOT DEALING WITH A *SAINT* HERE.
NOT VERY *TALKATIVE*, ARE YOU, DOUBLE DEE?
WONDER IF I BEAT YOU ABOUT THE *FACE* A BIT IT WOULD LOOSEN YOUR *TONGUE?*
THAT *CLINCHES* IT. BETTER PREPARE TO--
NNNN... *NAH*. NOT TONIGHT.
I'LL CONTENT MYSELF WITH A PEEK AT YOUR *PUSS*.
HANDSOME DEVIL, AINTCHA? WEREN'T YOU IN THE APRIL *PLAYGIRL?*
WHUNK
WELL, HATE TO PEEK AND *RUN*, DOUBLE DEE, BUT I GOT SOME *SERIOUS BUSINESS* TO ATTEND TO.
YOU STILL OUT HERE WHEN I GET *BACK*, MAYBE I'LL KICK YOU AROUND A BIT *THEN*.
PEACE, BABY.

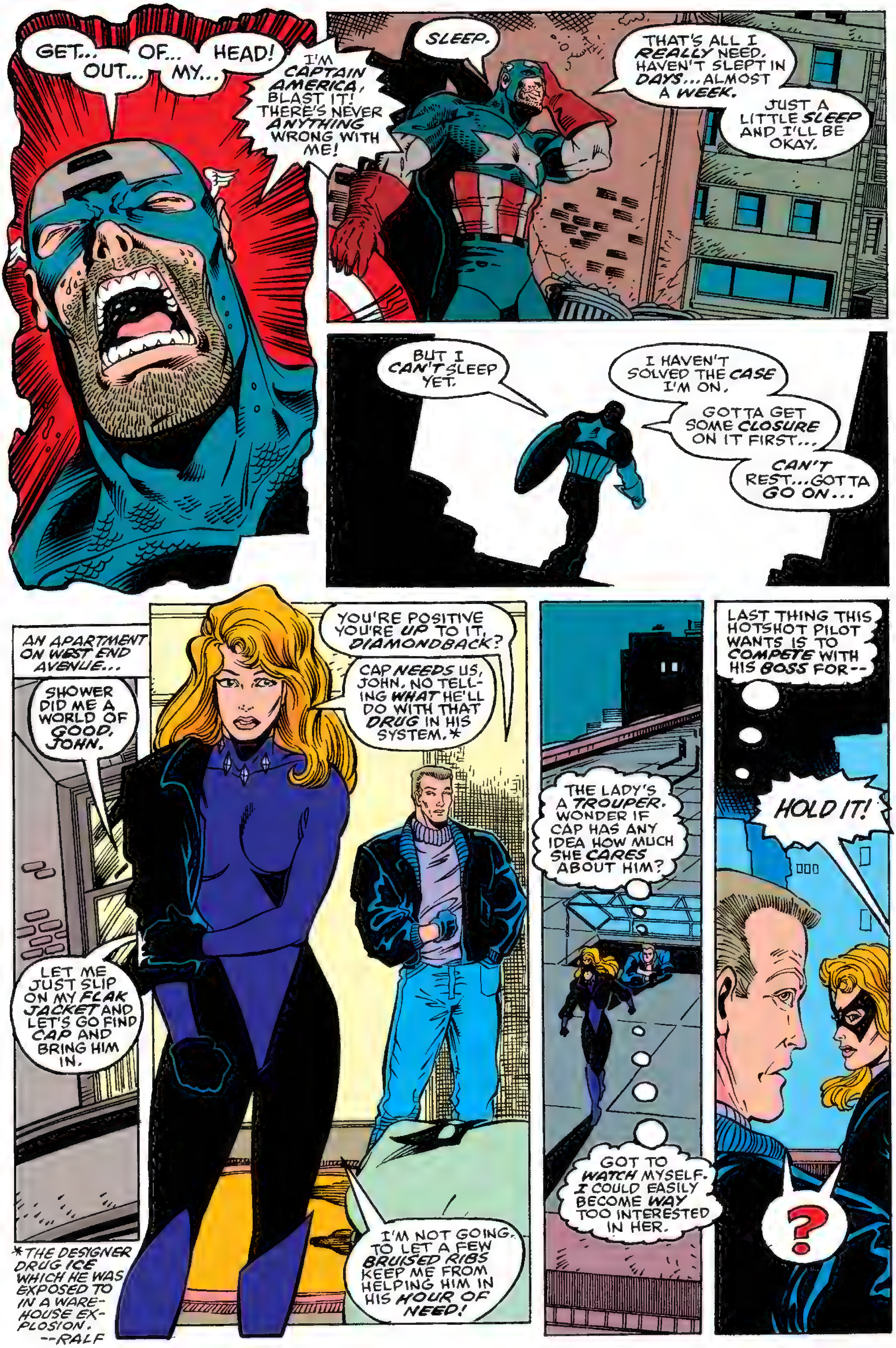

WHO *IS* THIS GUY?
I WAS SURE HE WAS GOING TO WORK HIS *NAME* INTO HIS *MONOLOG* AT LEAST ONCE.
SMELLED *GUNPOWDER*, *EXPLOSIVES*, AND OILED *STEEL* ON HIM.
WHOEVER HE IS, HE'S ARMED TO THE *TEETH*.
ACROSS FROM THE PLAYGROUND, ONE OF THE CITY'S MOST EXCLUSIVE RESTAURANTS...
KITCHEN ENTRANCE MUST BE DOWN THIS ALLEY...
HEY, LUIGI! *PIZZA DELIVERY!*
WHAT? THERE IS NO LUIGI HERE.
THUD
'S OKAY. I AIN'T GOT A *PIZZA* EITHER.
DONALD--? WHO'S--?
KRTTNNK
WAIT YOUR *TURN*, PAL. PLENNY OF DEATH TO GO *AROUND*.
THOK

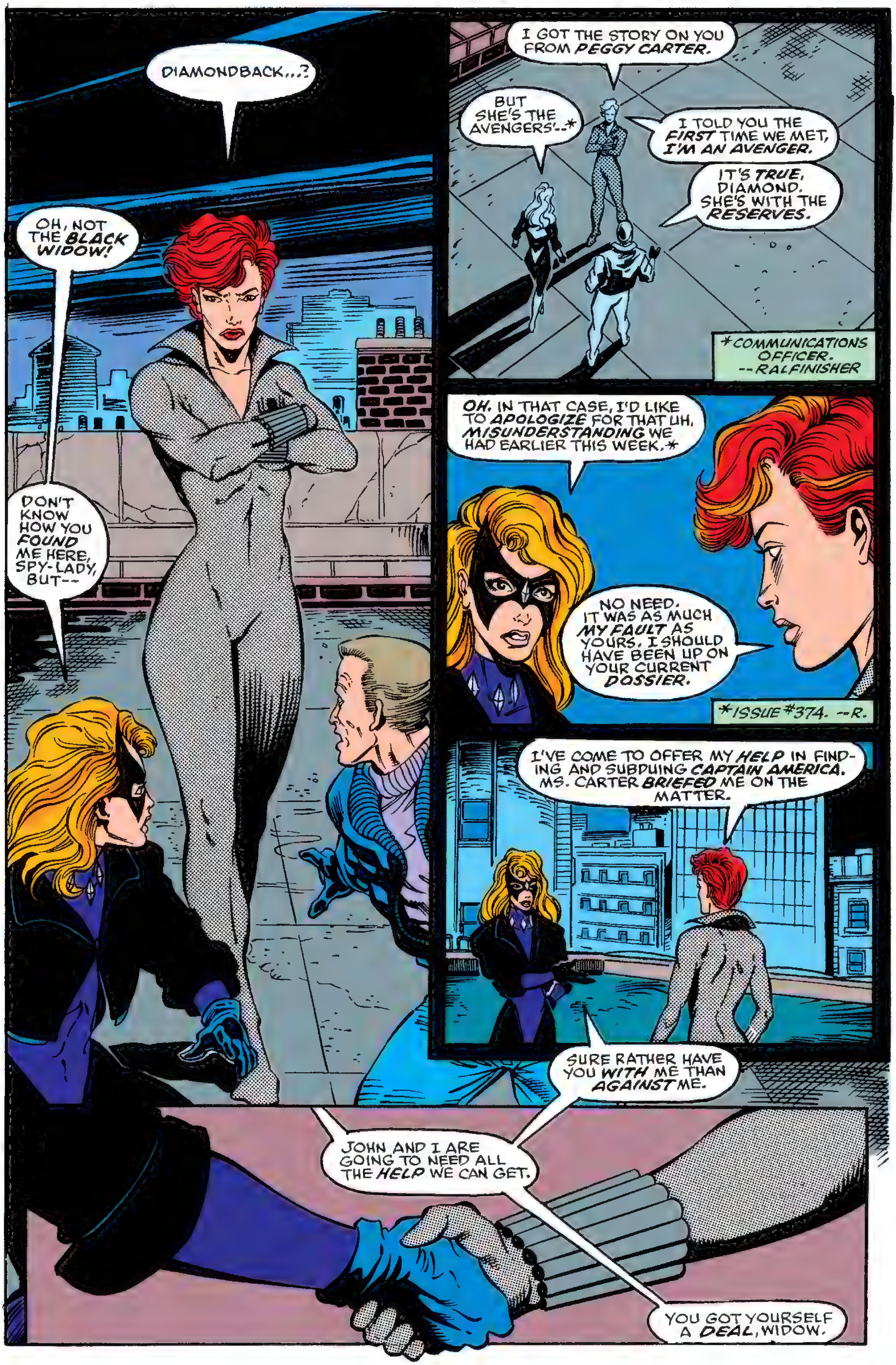

SPAGHETTI-SLINGERS MAKE TOO MUCH *NOISE* DYIN'!
BETTER *HAUL* BEFORE MY TARGET GETS SUSPICIOUS.
AND THERE HE IS-- THE *KINGPIN* HIMSELF! HAH, THE FAT MAN'S SUCH AN *EASY TARGET.*
ONE SHOT AN' IT'S *ALL OVER.*
BUT THANKS TO THE *NOISE*, I GOTTA TAKE HIS *GUN-TOTIN' GOON* OUT FIRST!
WHO *IS* THIS MAN WITH THE CROSSBONES?
TYPHOID-- DOWN!
BRTBRRRTBRRT
BRRRP
NYUUGK!
OKAY, KINGSY, COMIN' *AT* YA--
--RIGHT BETWEEN THE *EYES!*
WHOOM
WHUK

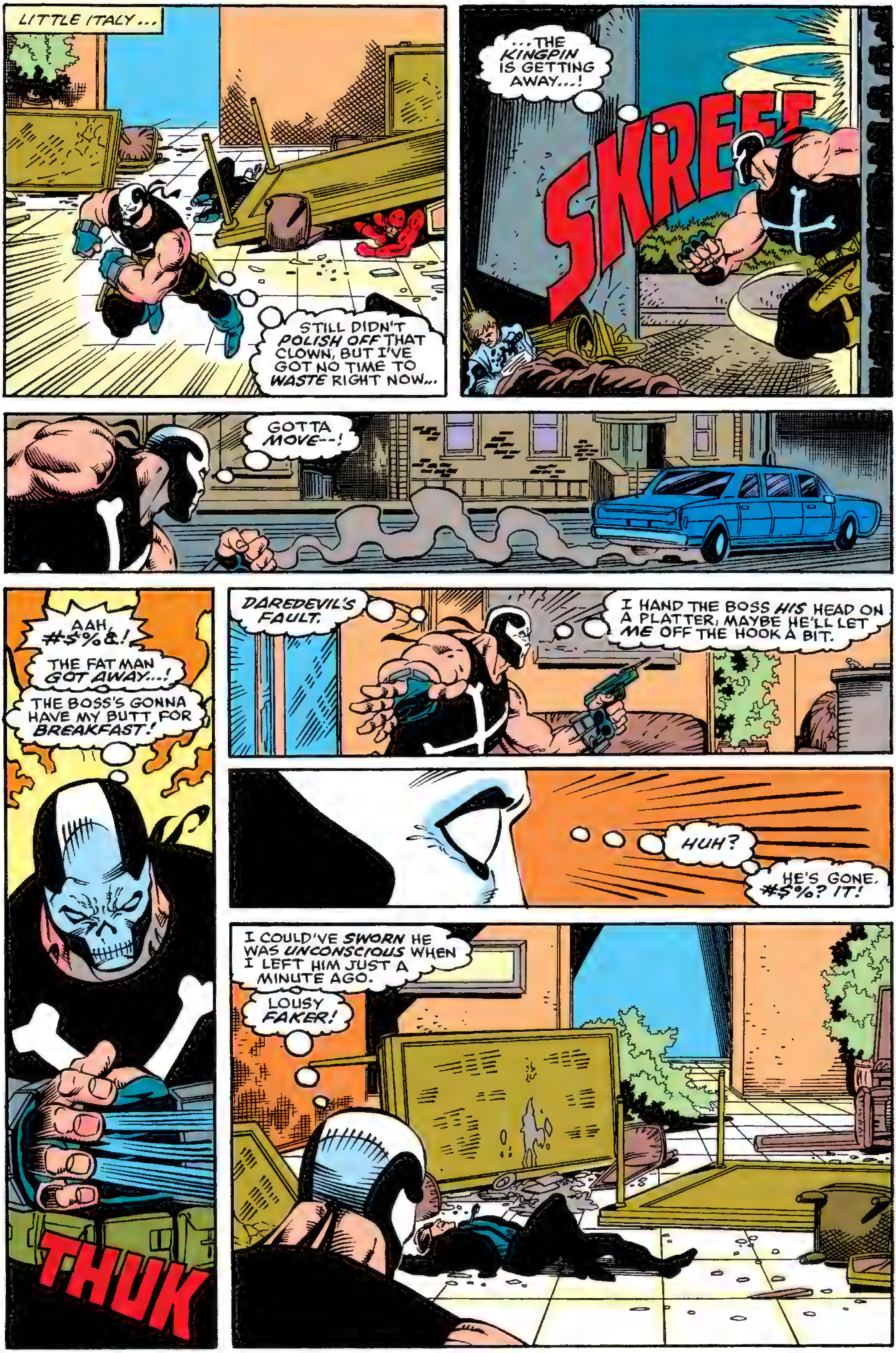

HE MISSED! I DON'T!
BUT...
KLONKK
WHAT HIT ME--?
SORRY TO BLINDSIDE YOU LIKE THAT, BUT YOU MUST ADMIT IT FELT BETTER THAN THAT KNIFE WOULD'VE!
DARE NOT LET HIM KNOW I'M STILL A BIT UNSTEADY ON MY FEET... BETTER FOLLOW THROUGH WITH MY ATTACK FAST!
WAIT, I DETECT THE KINGPIN'S IN THIS ROOM. AND JUDGING BY THE TIPPED FURNITURE, THIS JOKER MUST'VE TRIED TO KILL HIM!
YOU!
SHOULDA PULPED YA WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE!
MY GREATEST NEMESIS--DAREDEVIL--FIGHTING IN MY INTERESTS, FOR ONCE! AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE TO MAKE CERTAIN MY WOULD-BE ASSASSIN PAYS FOR HIS TEMERITY--
--PRUDENCE DICTATES THAT I JOIN TYPHOID IN MAKING A HASTY RETREAT FROM THESE PREMISES.
NAME'S DAREDEVIL, CHUMP!
WHAT'S YOURS?

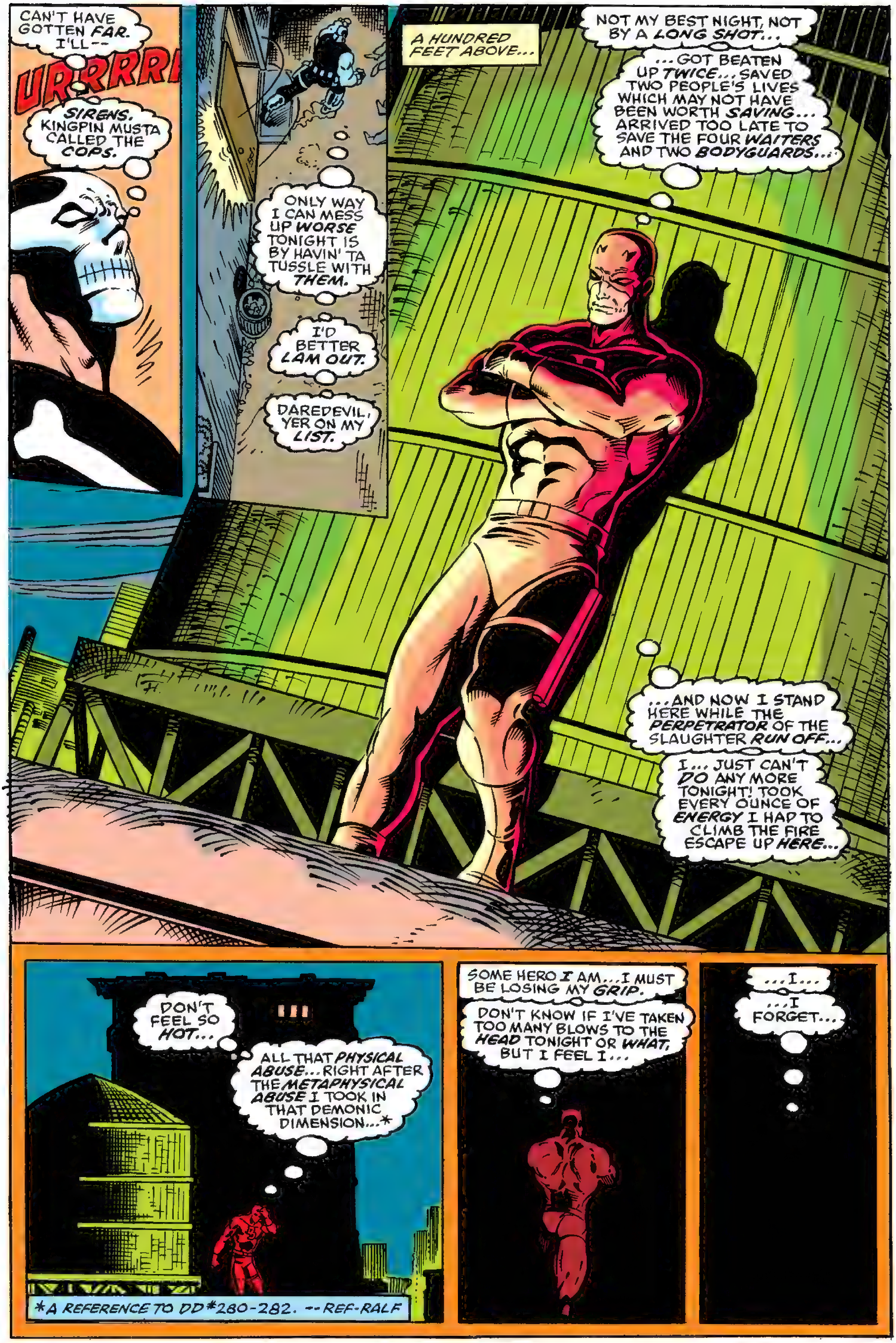

USE YER 'MAGINATION, DEEDS! WHAT'S MY CHEST EMBLEM LOOK LIKE?
IF MY RADAR SENSE ENABLED ME TO SEE FLAT PATTERNS, I COULD TELL HIM! WHOA-- BETTER STOP WORRYING ABOUT HIS IDENTITY, AND START WORRYING ABOUT HIS FISTS!
ALMOST LET THAT ONE MAKE CONTACT!
FELLOW'S A LOT LIKE CAP--
--HIS METABOLISM IS SO STRONG I CAN'T "READ" IT TO ANTICIPATE HIS MOVES!
LOOKS LIKE KINGPIN'S TAKING A POWDER!
LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING, PAL-- I ALREADY LOST ONE FIGHT TONIGHT. I'M NOT ABOUT TO LOSE ANOTHER!
WHONK
CAN'T WASTE MY TIME WITH THIS DO-GOODER-- I GOTTA NAIL THE KINGPIN BEFORE HE GETS AWAY!

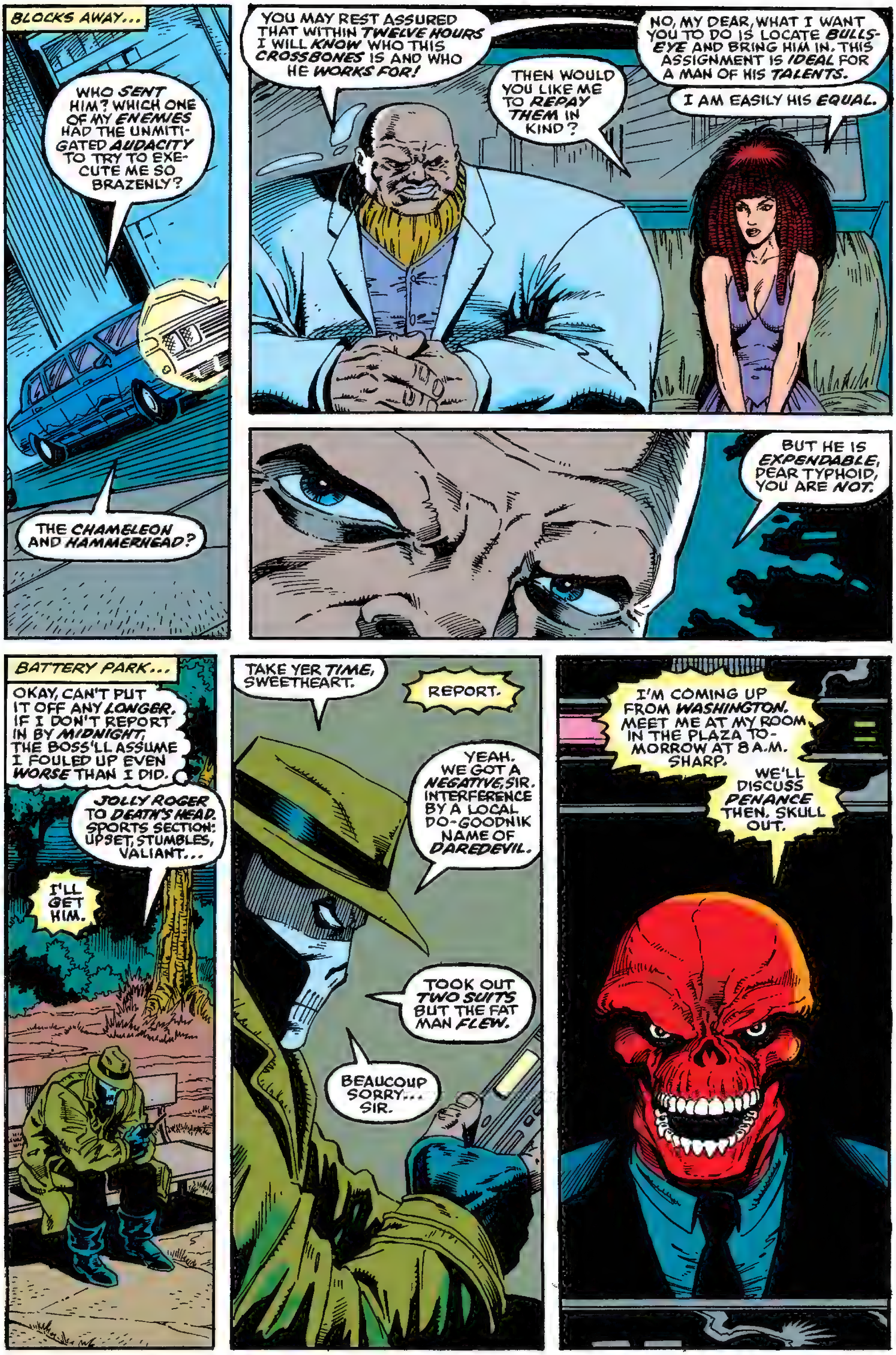

ELSEWHERE, IN MANHATTAN...
GOT TO... GOT TO REST A MOMENT...
WEIRD. EVER SINCE THAT FIGHT WITH DAREDEVIL, I CAN'T SEEM TO GET MY ADRENALIN UNDER CONTROL...
I'M TENSE, TREMBLING... LIKE MY NERVES ARE SHOT OR--
THERE HE IS! GET HIM!
WHAT? WHO'S THAT--? SOUNDS LIKE--LIKE--TROUBLE!
THEY THINK TO CATCH ME UNPREPARED?
HAAH!
HUH? THERE'S NOBODY THERE.
OH, MAN.
I WAS FEELING SO GOOD, SO--CAPABLE, ON TOP OF THE WORLD! THEN WHAT HAPPENED?
I'M NOT SURE. BUT IT HAPPENED RIGHT AFTER I LEFT DAREDEVIL...
FIRST THE JITTERS... NOW I'M HEARING THINGS... I MUST BE EXHAUSTED...
THAT'S NOT ALL YOU ARE, MY STAR-SPANGLED SIMPLETON! YOU'RE SKATING ON THE EDGE, OUT OF CONTROL, READY FOR A CRACK-UP!
VOICES... HEARING VOICES AGAIN...!
YOU'RE A DISGRACE TO YOUR UNIFORM! I THINK THE COMMISSION WILL HAVE TO TAKE IT FROM YOU AGAIN--GIVE IT TO SOMEONE MORE DESERVING!
OKAY, I'M ON DRUGS! BUT WHAT DO YOU THINK THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM IS? KOOL-AID?
IT'S A DEMAND SIDE PROBLEM, CAP. YOU'VE JUST GOT TO DECREASE YOUR DEMAND--!
YOU NEED HELP, CAP. THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH YOU--REAL WRONG!

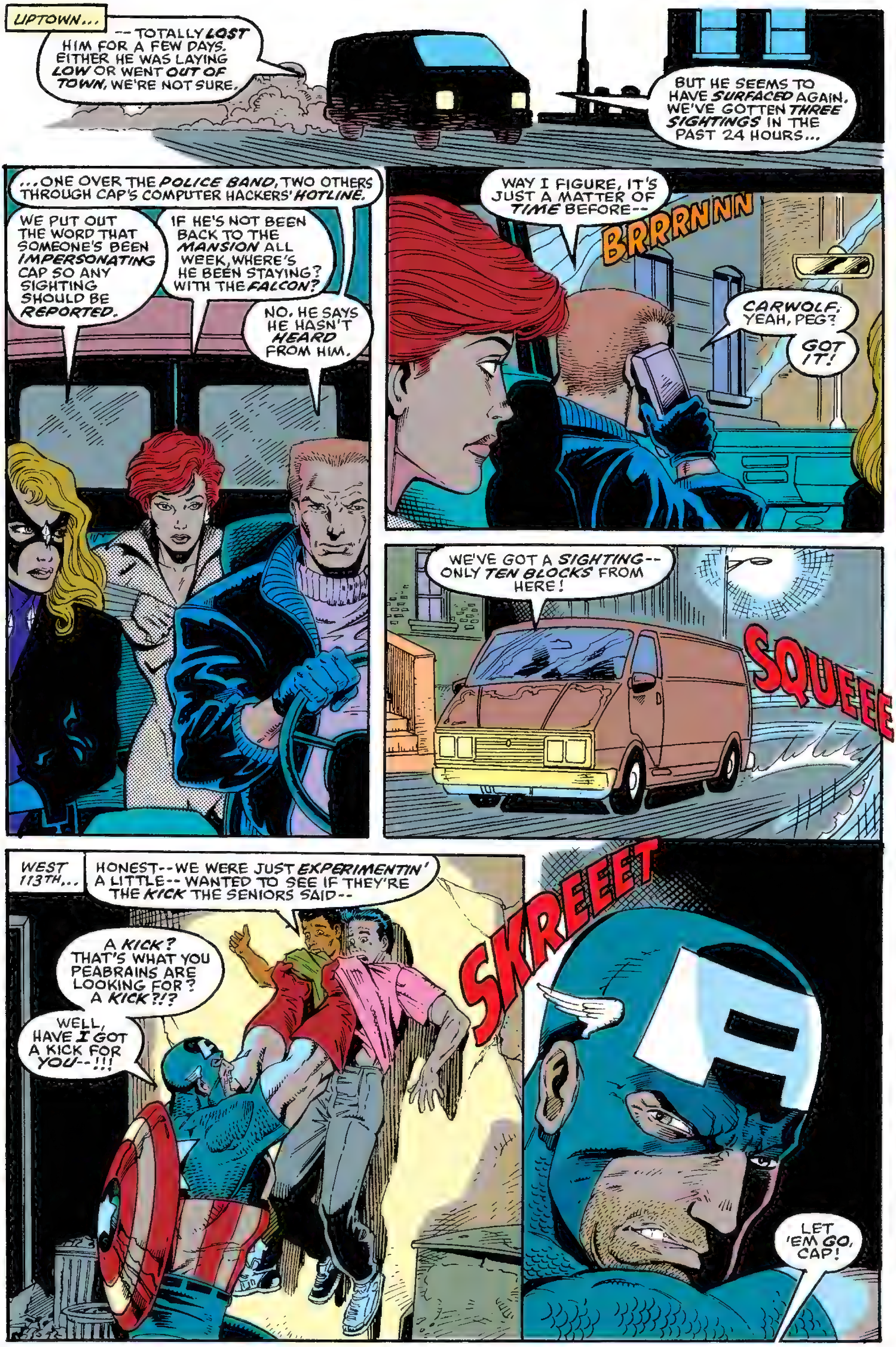

GET... OUT... OF... MY... HEAD!
I'M CAPTAIN AMERICA, BLAST IT! THERE'S NEVER ANYTHING WRONG WITH ME!
SLEEP.
THAT'S ALL I REALLY NEED. HAVEN'T SLEPT IN DAYS... ALMOST A WEEK.
JUST A LITTLE SLEEP AND I'LL BE OKAY.
BUT I CAN'T SLEEP YET.
I HAVEN'T SOLVED THE CASE I'M ON.
GOTTA GET SOME CLOSURE ON IT FIRST...
CAN'T REST... GOTTA GO ON...
AN APARTMENT ON WEST END AVENUE...
SHOWER DID ME A WORLD OF GOOD, JOHN.
LET ME JUST SLIP ON MY FLAK JACKET AND LET'S GO FIND CAP AND BRING HIM IN.
YOU'RE POSITIVE YOU'RE UP TO IT, DIAMONDBACK?
CAP NEEDS US, JOHN. NO TELLING WHAT HE'LL DO WITH THAT DRUG IN HIS SYSTEM.*
I'M NOT GOING TO LET A FEW BRUISED RIBS KEEP ME FROM HELPING HIM IN HIS HOUR OF NEED!
*THE DESIGNER DRUG ICE WHICH HE WAS EXPOSED TO IN A WAREHOUSE EXPLOSION. --RALF
THE LADY'S A TROUPER. WONDER IF CAP HAS ANY IDEA HOW MUCH SHE CARES ABOUT HIM?
GOT TO WATCH MYSELF. I COULD EASILY BECOME WAY TOO INTERESTED IN HER.
LAST THING THIS HOTSHOT PILOT WANTS IS TO COMPETE WITH HIS BOSS FOR--
HOLD IT!
?

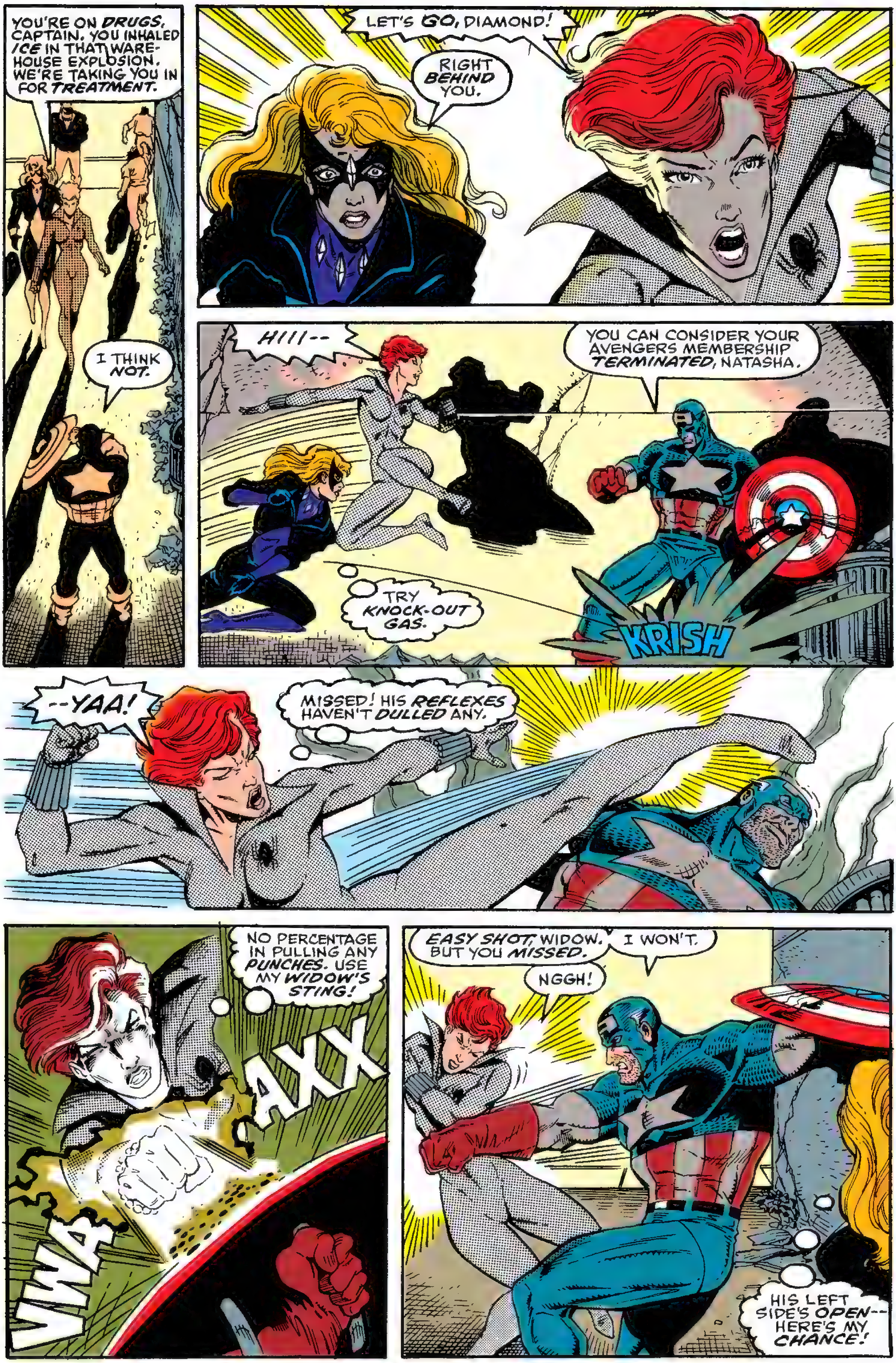

DIAMONDBACK...?
OH, NOT THE BLACK WIDOW!
DON'T KNOW HOW YOU FOUND ME HERE, SPY-LADY, BUT--
I GOT THE STORY ON YOU FROM PEGGY CARTER.
BUT SHE'S THE AVENGERS'--*
I TOLD YOU THE FIRST TIME WE MET, I'M AN AVENGER.
IT'S TRUE, DIAMOND. SHE'S WITH THE RESERVES.
*COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER. --RALFINISHER
OH. IN THAT CASE, I'D LIKE TO APOLOGIZE FOR THAT UH, MISUNDERSTANDING WE HAD EARLIER THIS WEEK.*
NO NEED. IT WAS AS MUCH MY FAULT AS YOURS. I SHOULD HAVE BEEN UP ON YOUR CURRENT DOSSIER.
*ISSUE #374. --R.
I'VE COME TO OFFER MY HELP IN FINDING AND SUBDUING CAPTAIN AMERICA. MS. CARTER BRIEFED ME ON THE MATTER.
SURE RATHER HAVE YOU WITH ME THAN AGAINST ME.
JOHN AND I ARE GOING TO NEED ALL THE HELP WE CAN GET.
YOU GOT YOURSELF A DEAL, WIDOW.

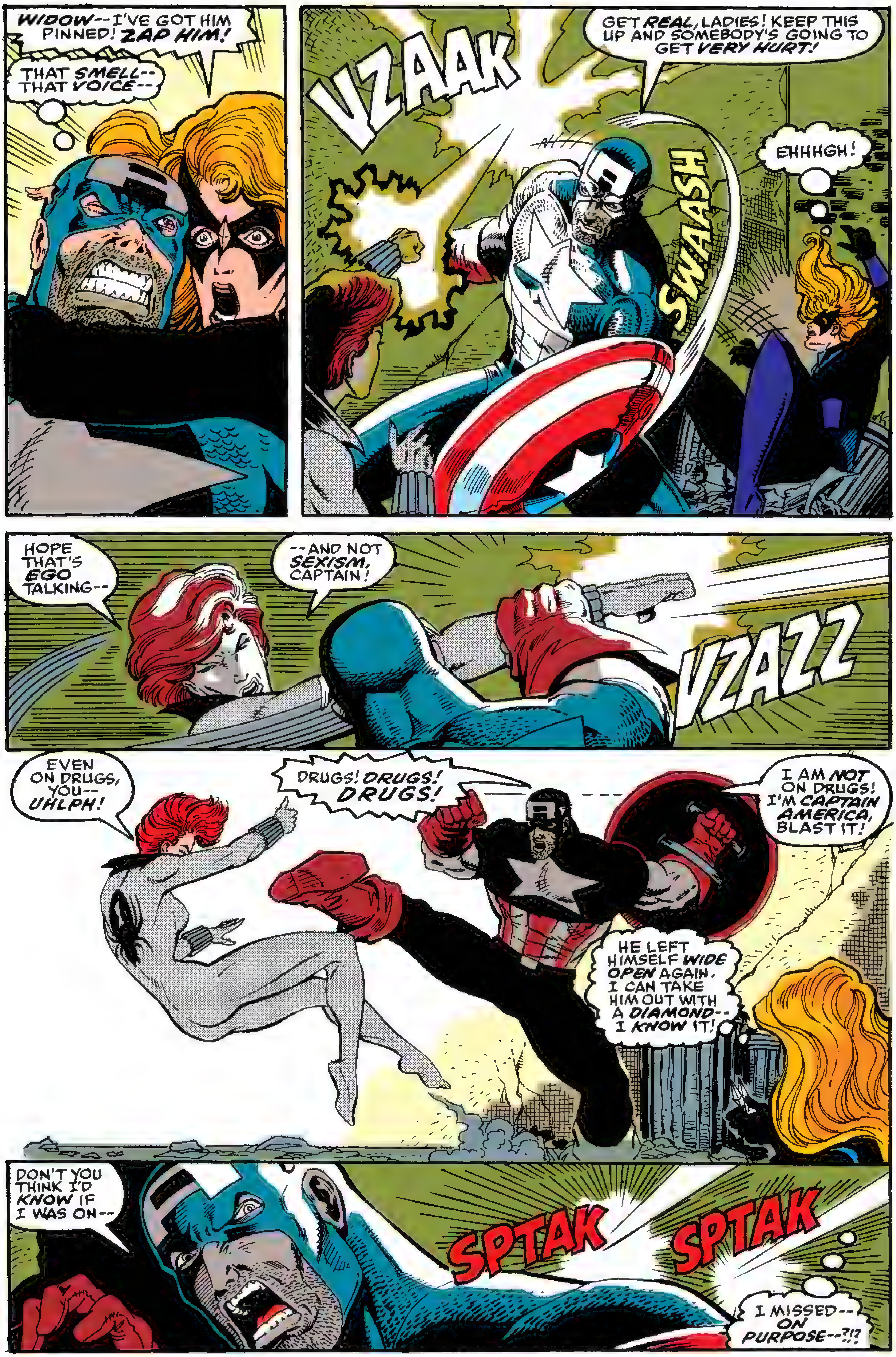

LITTLE ITALY...
STILL DIDN'T POLISH OFF THAT CLOWN, BUT I'VE GOT NO TIME TO WASTE RIGHT NOW...
...THE KINGPIN IS GETTING AWAY...!
SKREEE
GOTTA MOVE--!
AAH, #$%&!
THE FAT MAN GOT AWAY...!
THE BOSS'S GONNA HAVE MY BUTT FOR BREAKFAST!
THUK
DAREDEVIL'S FAULT.
I HAND THE BOSS HIS HEAD ON A PLATTER, MAYBE HE'LL LET ME OFF THE HOOK A BIT.
HUH?
HE'S GONE. #$%? IT!
I COULD'VE SWORN HE WAS UNCONSCIOUS WHEN I LEFT HIM JUST A MINUTE AGO.
LOUSY FAKER!

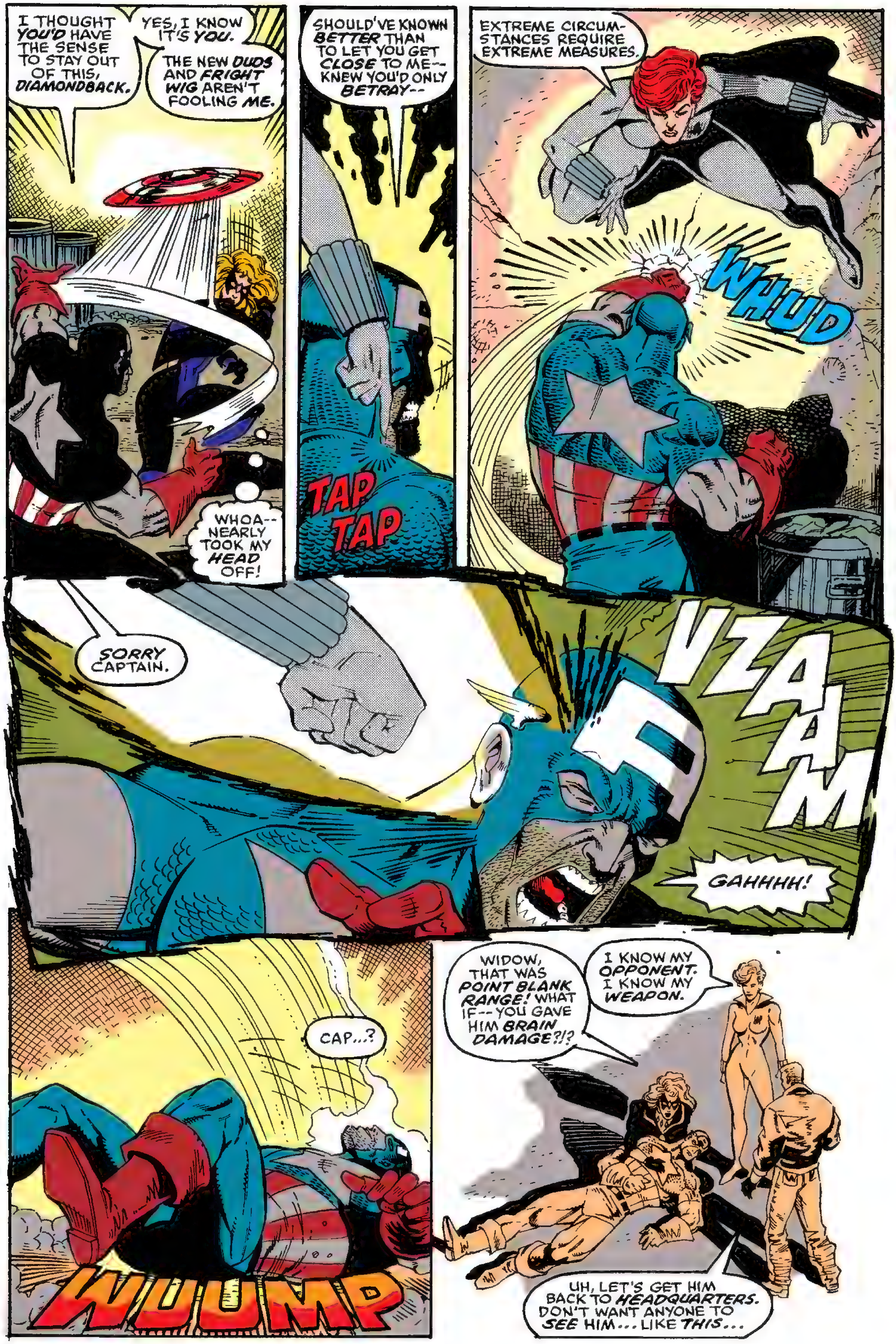

CAN'T HAVE GOTTEN FAR. I'LL--
URRRRR
SIRENS. KINGPIN MUSTA CALLED THE COPS.
ONLY WAY I CAN MESS UP WORSE TONIGHT IS BY HAVIN' TA TUSSLE WITH THEM.
I'D BETTER LAM OUT.
DAREDEVIL, YER ON MY LIST.
A HUNDRED FEET ABOVE...
NOT MY BEST NIGHT, NOT BY A LONG SHOT...
...GOT BEATEN UP TWICE... SAVED TWO PEOPLE'S LIVES WHICH MAY NOT HAVE BEEN WORTH SAVING... ARRIVED TOO LATE TO SAVE THE FOUR WAITERS AND TWO BODYGUARDS...
...AND NOW I STAND HERE WHILE THE PERPETRATOR OF THE SLAUGHTER RUN OFF...
I... JUST CAN'T DO ANY MORE TONIGHT! TOOK EVERY OUNCE OF ENERGY I HAD TO CLIMB THE FIRE ESCAPE UP HERE...
DON'T FEEL SO HOT...
ALL THAT PHYSICAL ABUSE... RIGHT AFTER THE METAPHYSICAL ABUSE I TOOK IN THAT DEMONIC DIMENSION...*
*A REFERENCE TO DD#280-282. --REF-RALF
SOME HERO I AM... I MUST BE LOSING MY GRIP.
DON'T KNOW IF I'VE TAKEN TOO MANY BLOWS TO THE HEAD TONIGHT OR WHAT, BUT I FEEL I...
...I...
...I FORGET...

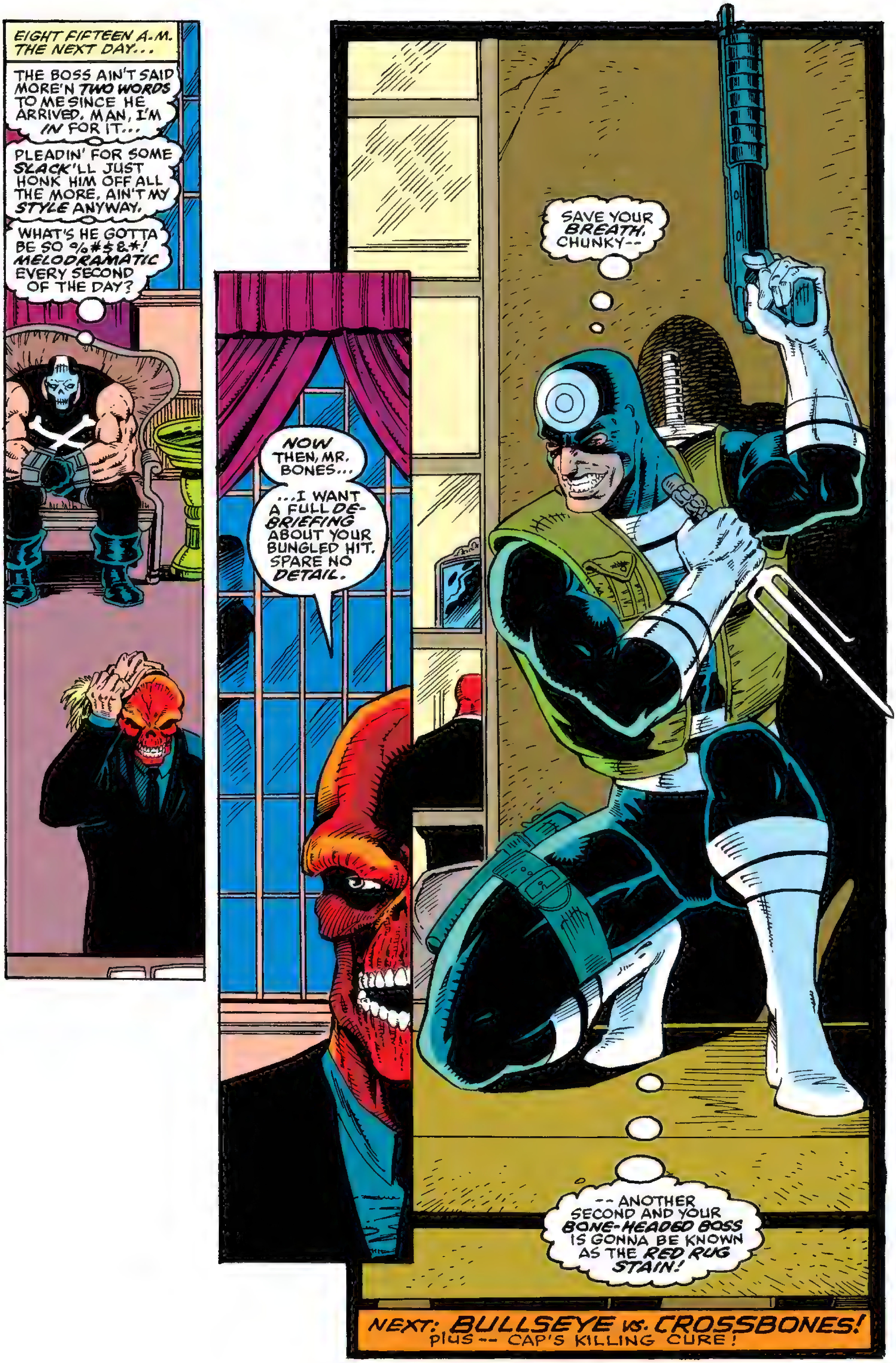

BLOCKS AWAY...
WHO SENT HIM? WHICH ONE OF MY ENEMIES HAD THE UNMITIGATED AUDACITY TO TRY TO EXECUTE ME SO BRAZENLY?
THE CHAMELEON AND HAMMERHEAD?
YOU MAY REST ASSURED THAT WITHIN TWELVE HOURS I WILL KNOW WHO THIS CROSSBONES IS AND WHO HE WORKS FOR!
THEN WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO REPAY THEM IN KIND?
NO, MY DEAR, WHAT I WANT YOU TO DO IS LOCATE BULLSEYE AND BRING HIM IN. THIS ASSIGNMENT IS IDEAL FOR A MAN OF HIS TALENTS.
I AM EASILY HIS EQUAL.
BUT HE IS EXPENDABLE, DEAR TYPHOID, YOU ARE NOT.
BATTERY PARK...
OKAY, CAN'T PUT IT OFF ANY LONGER. IF I DON'T REPORT IN BY MIDNIGHT, THE BOSS'LL ASSUME I FOULED UP EVEN WORSE THAN I DID.
JOLLY ROGER TO DEATH'S HEAD. SPORTS SECTION: UPSET, STUMBLES, VALIANT...
I'LL GET HIM.
TAKE YER TIME, SWEETHEART.
REPORT.
YEAH. WE GOT A NEGATIVE, SIR. INTERFERENCE BY A LOCAL DO-GOODNIK NAME OF DAREDEVIL.
TOOK OUT TWO SUITS BUT THE FAT MAN FLEW.
BEAUCOUP SORRY... SIR.
I'M COMING UP FROM WASHINGTON. MEET ME AT MY ROOM IN THE PLAZA TOMORROW AT 8 A.M. SHARP.
WE'LL DISCUSS PENANCE THEN. SKULL OUT.


UPTOWN...
--TOTALLY LOST HIM FOR A FEW DAYS. EITHER HE WAS LAYING LOW OR WENT OUT OF TOWN, WE'RE NOT SURE.
BUT HE SEEMS TO HAVE SURFACED AGAIN. WE'VE GOTTEN THREE SIGHTINGS IN THE PAST 24 HOURS...
...ONE OVER THE POLICE BAND, TWO OTHERS THROUGH CAP'S COMPUTER HACKERS' HOTLINE.
WE PUT OUT THE WORD THAT SOMEONE'S BEEN IMPERSONATING CAP SO ANY SIGHTING SHOULD BE REPORTED.
IF HE'S NOT BEEN BACK TO THE MANSION ALL WEEK, WHERE'S HE BEEN STAYING? WITH THE FALCON?
NO. HE SAYS HE HASN'T HEARD FROM HIM.
WAY I FIGURE, IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE--
BRRRNNN
CARWOLF. YEAH, PEG?
GOT IT!
WE'VE GOT A SIGHTING-- ONLY TEN BLOCKS FROM HERE!
SQUEEE
WEST 113TH...
HONEST--WE WERE JUST EXPERIMENTIN' A LITTLE--WANTED TO SEE IF THEY'RE THE KICK THE SENIORS SAID--
A KICK? THAT'S WHAT YOU PEABRAINS ARE LOOKING FOR? A KICK?!?
WELL, HAVE I GOT A KICK FOR YOU--!!!
SKREEET
LET 'EM GO, CAP!


YOU'RE ON DRUGS, CAPTAIN. YOU INHALED ICE IN THAT WAREHOUSE EXPLOSION. WE'RE TAKING YOU IN FOR TREATMENT.
I THINK NOT.
LET'S GO, DIAMOND!
RIGHT BEHIND YOU.
HIII--
YOU CAN CONSIDER YOUR AVENGERS MEMBERSHIP TERMINATED, NATASHA.
TRY KNOCK-OUT GAS.
KRISH
--YAA!
MISSED! HIS REFLEXES HAVEN'T DULLED ANY.
NO PERCENTAGE IN PULLING ANY PUNCHES. USE MY WIDOW'S STING!
VWAAXX
EASY SHOT, WIDOW. BUT YOU MISSED.
I WON'T.
NGGH!
HIS LEFT SIDE'S OPEN-- HERE'S MY CHANCE!


WIDOW--I'VE GOT HIM PINNED! ZAP HIM!
THAT SMELL--THAT VOICE--
VZAAK
GET REAL, LADIES! KEEP THIS UP AND SOMEBODY'S GOING TO GET VERY HURT!
SWASH
EHHHGH!
HOPE THAT'S EGO TALKING--
--AND NOT SEXISM, CAPTAIN!
VZAZZ
EVEN ON DRUGS, YOU--UHLPH!
DRUGS! DRUGS! DRUGS!
I AM NOT ON DRUGS! I'M CAPTAIN AMERICA, BLAST IT!
HE LEFT HIMSELF WIDE OPEN AGAIN. I CAN TAKE HIM OUT WITH A DIAMOND--I KNOW IT!
DON'T YOU THINK I'D KNOW IF I WAS ON--
SPTAK
SPTAK
I MISSED--ON PURPOSE--?!?


I THOUGHT YOU'D HAVE THE SENSE TO STAY OUT OF THIS, DIAMONDBACK.
YES, I KNOW IT'S YOU.
THE NEW DUDS AND FRIGHT WIG AREN'T FOOLING ME.
WHOA-- NEARLY TOOK MY HEAD OFF!
SHOULD'VE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO LET YOU GET CLOSE TO ME-- KNEW YOU'D ONLY BETRAY--
TAP TAP
EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRE EXTREME MEASURES.
WHUD
SORRY CAPTAIN.
VZAAM
GAHHHH!
CAP...?
WUUMP
WIDOW, THAT WAS POINT BLANK RANGE! WHAT IF--YOU GAVE HIM BRAIN DAMAGE?!?
I KNOW MY OPPONENT. I KNOW MY WEAPON.
UH, LET'S GET HIM BACK TO HEADQUARTERS. DON'T WANT ANYONE TO SEE HIM... LIKE THIS...

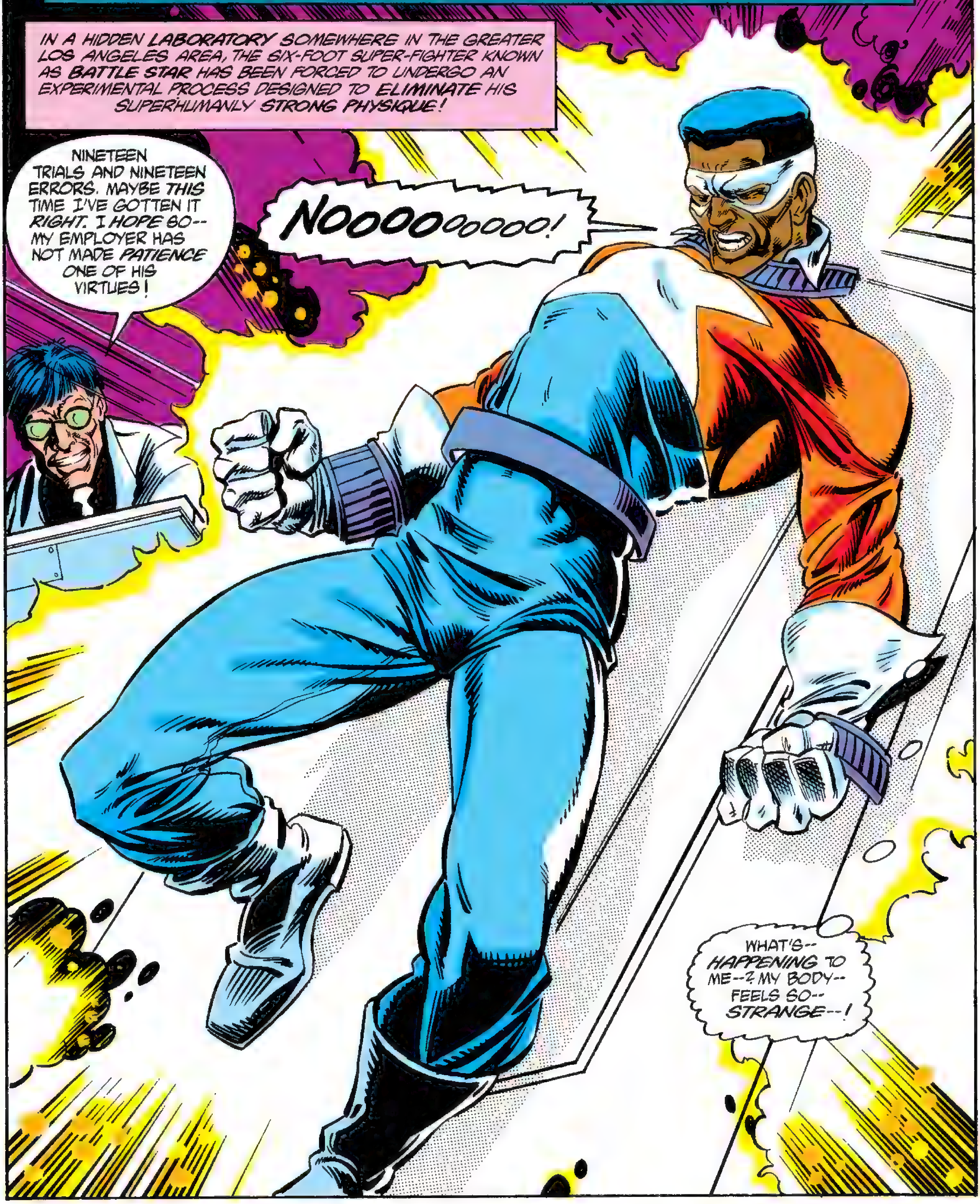

EIGHT FIFTEEN A.M. THE NEXT DAY...
THE BOSS AIN'T SAID MORE'N *TWO WORDS* TO ME SINCE HE ARRIVED. MAN, I'M *IN* FOR IT...
PLEADIN' FOR SOME *SLACK*'LL JUST HONK HIM OFF ALL THE MORE. AIN'T MY *STYLE* ANYWAY.
WHAT'S HE GOTTA BE SO %#$&*! *MELODRAMATIC* EVERY SECOND OF THE DAY?
NOW THEN, MR. BONES...
...I WANT A FULL *DE-BRIEFING* ABOUT YOUR BUNGLED HIT. SPARE NO *DETAIL*.
SAVE YOUR *BREATH*, CHUNKY--
--ANOTHER SECOND AND YOUR *BONE-HEADED BOSS* IS GONNA BE KNOWN AS THE *RED RUG STAIN!*
NEXT: BULLSEYE VS. CROSSBONES!
plus -- CAP'S KILLING CURE!

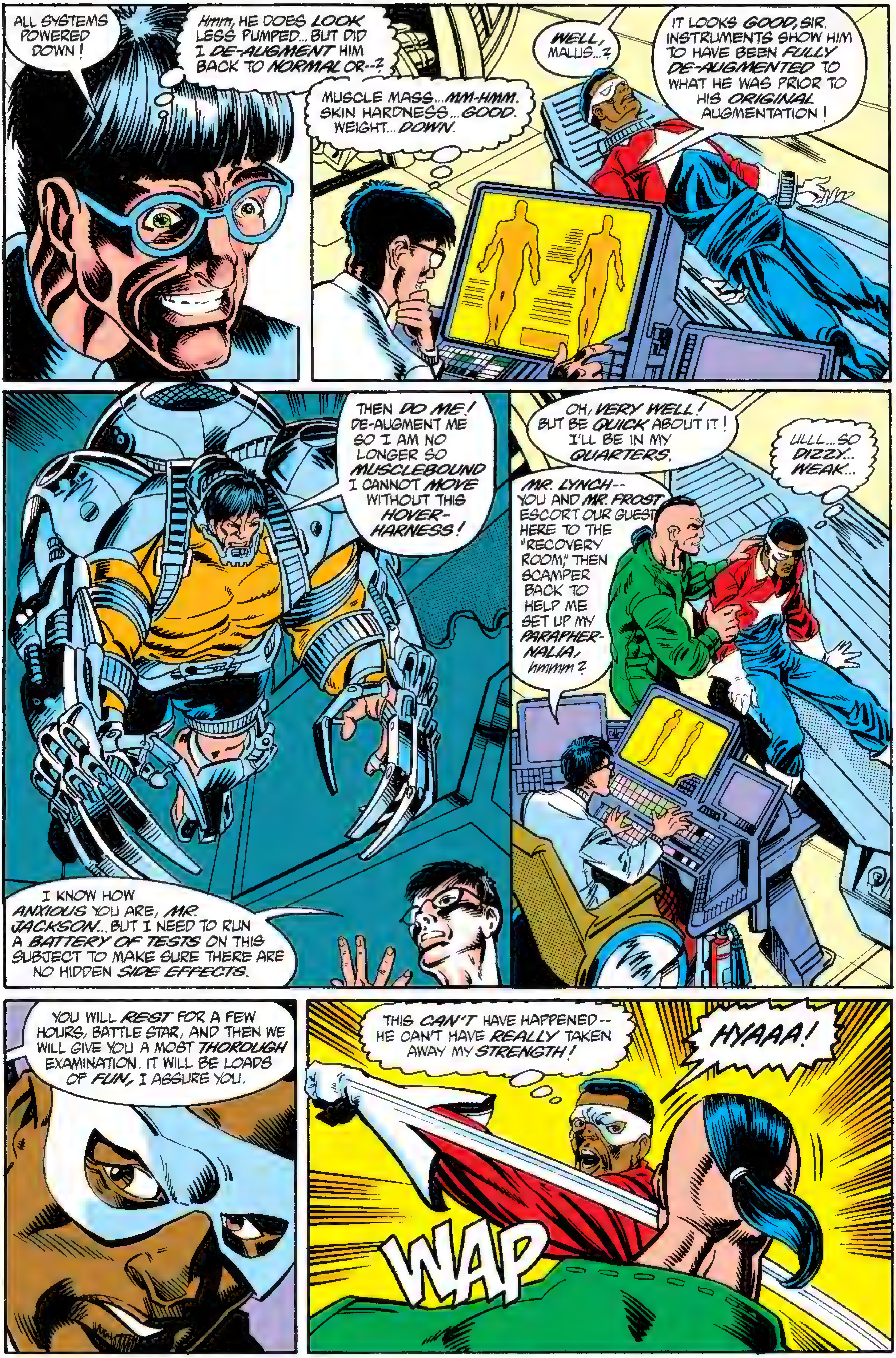
Stan Lee PRESENTS:

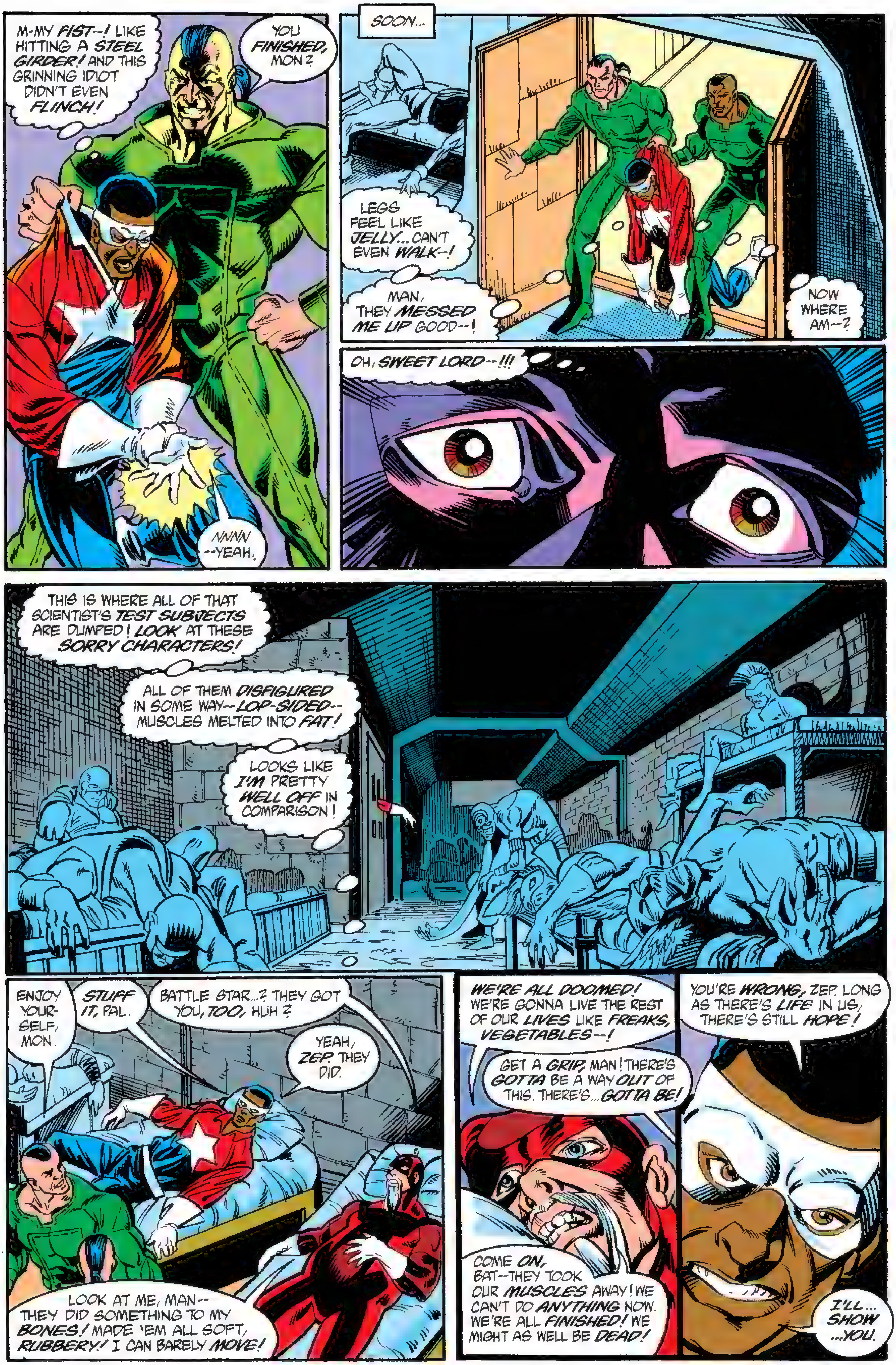
BATTLE STAR

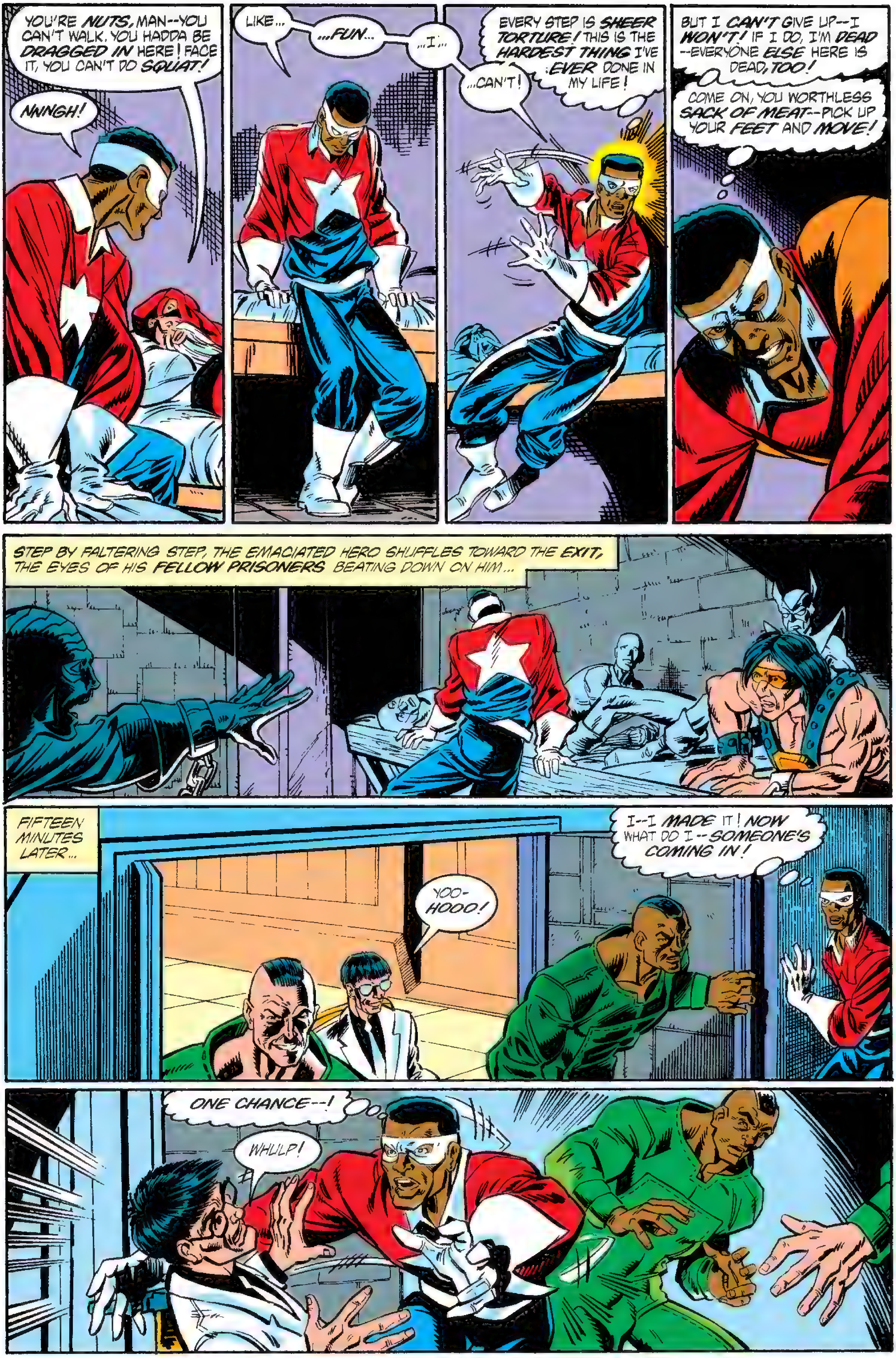
STRONGHOLD OF THE WEAK

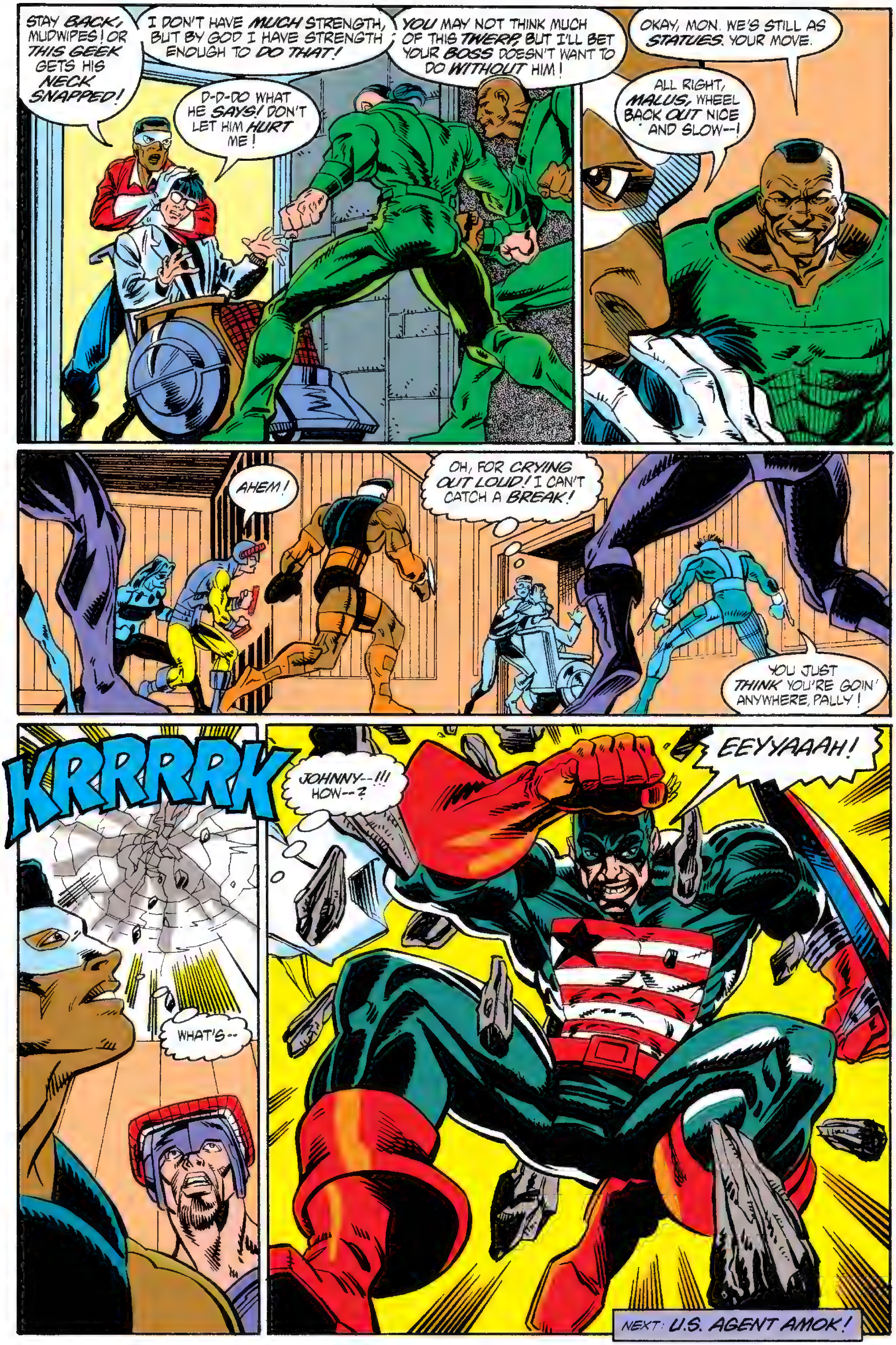
IN A HIDDEN *LABORATORY* SOMEWHERE IN THE GREATER LOS ANGELES AREA, THE SIX-FOOT SUPER-FIGHTER KNOWN AS *BATTLE STAR* HAS BEEN FORCED TO UNDERGO AN EXPERIMENTAL PROCESS DESIGNED TO *ELIMINATE* HIS SUPERHUMANLY *STRONG PHYSIQUE!*


NINETEEN TRIALS AND NINETEEN ERRORS. MAYBE *THIS* TIME I'VE GOTTEN IT *RIGHT.* I *HOPE* SO-- MY EMPLOYER HAS NOT MADE *PATIENCE* ONE OF HIS VIRTUES!
NOOOOOOOOOO!
WHAT'S-- *HAPPENING* TO ME--? MY BODY-- FEELS SO-- *STRANGE*--!


ALL SYSTEMS POWERED DOWN!
Hmm, HE DOES LOOK LESS PUMPED... BUT DID I DE-AUGMENT HIM BACK TO NORMAL OR--?
MUSCLE MASS... MM-HMM. SKIN HARDNESS... GOOD. WEIGHT... DOWN.
WELL, MALUS...?
IT LOOKS GOOD, SIR. INSTRUMENTS SHOW HIM TO HAVE BEEN FULLY DE-AUGMENTED TO WHAT HE WAS PRIOR TO HIS ORIGINAL AUGMENTATION!
THEN DO ME! DE-AUGMENT ME SO I AM NO LONGER SO MUSCLEBOUND I CANNOT MOVE WITHOUT THIS HOVER-HARNESS!
I KNOW HOW ANXIOUS YOU ARE, MR. JACKSON... BUT I NEED TO RUN A BATTERY OF TESTS ON THIS SUBJECT TO MAKE SURE THERE ARE NO HIDDEN SIDE EFFECTS.
OH, VERY WELL! BUT BE QUICK ABOUT IT! I'LL BE IN MY QUARTERS.
ULLL... SO DIZZY... WEAK...
MR. LYNCH-- YOU AND MR. FROST ESCORT OUR GUEST HERE TO THE "RECOVERY ROOM," THEN SCAMPER BACK TO HELP ME SET UP MY PARAPHERNALIA, hmmm?
YOU WILL REST FOR A FEW HOURS, BATTLE STAR, AND THEN WE WILL GIVE YOU A MOST THOROUGH EXAMINATION. IT WILL BE LOADS OF FUN, I ASSURE YOU.
THIS CAN'T HAVE HAPPENED-- HE CAN'T HAVE REALLY TAKEN AWAY MY STRENGTH!
HYAAA!
WAP


M-MY *FIST*--! LIKE HITTING A *STEEL GIRDER!* AND THIS GRINNING IDIOT DIDN'T EVEN *FLINCH!*
YOU *FINISHED,* MON?
NNNN --YEAH.
SOON...
LEGS FEEL LIKE *JELLY*... CAN'T EVEN *WALK*--!
MAN, THEY *MESSED ME UP* GOOD--!
NOW WHERE AM--?
OH, *SWEET LORD*--!!!
THIS IS WHERE ALL OF THAT SCIENTIST'S *TEST SUBJECTS* ARE DUMPED! *LOOK* AT THESE *SORRY CHARACTERS!*
ALL OF THEM *DISFIGURED* IN SOME WAY--*LOP-SIDED*--MUSCLES MELTED INTO *FAT!*
LOOKS LIKE *I'M* PRETTY *WELL OFF* IN COMPARISON!
ENJOY YOURSELF, MON.
STUFF IT, PAL.
BATTLE STAR...? THEY GOT YOU, *TOO,* HUH?
YEAH, *ZEP.* THEY DID.
LOOK AT ME, MAN-- THEY DID SOMETHING TO MY *BONES!* MADE 'EM ALL SOFT, *RUBBERY!* I CAN BARELY *MOVE!*
WE'RE ALL DOOMED! WE'RE GONNA LIVE THE REST OF OUR *LIVES* LIKE *FREAKS, VEGETABLES*--!
GET A *GRIP,* MAN! THERE'S *GOTTA* BE A WAY *OUT* OF THIS. THERE'S... *GOTTA BE!*
COME *ON,* BAT--THEY TOOK OUR *MUSCLES* AWAY! WE CAN'T DO *ANYTHING* NOW. WE'RE ALL *FINISHED!* WE MIGHT AS WELL BE *DEAD!*
YOU'RE *WRONG,* ZEP. LONG AS THERE'S *LIFE* IN US, THERE'S STILL *HOPE!*
I'LL... SHOW ...YOU.


YOU'RE NUTS, MAN--YOU CAN'T WALK. YOU HADDA BE DRAGGED IN HERE! FACE IT, YOU CAN'T DO SQUAT!
NNNGH!
LIKE...
...FUN...
...I...
...CAN'T!
EVERY STEP IS SHEER TORTURE! THIS IS THE HARDEST THING I'VE EVER DONE IN MY LIFE!
BUT I CAN'T GIVE UP--I WON'T! IF I DO, I'M DEAD --EVERYONE ELSE HERE IS DEAD, TOO!
COME ON, YOU WORTHLESS SACK OF MEAT--PICK UP YOUR FEET AND MOVE!
STEP BY FALTERING STEP, THE EMACIATED HERO SHUFFLES TOWARD THE EXIT, THE EYES OF HIS FELLOW PRISONERS BEATING DOWN ON HIM...
FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER...
YOO-HOOO!
I--I MADE IT! NOW WHAT DO I--SOMEONE'S COMING IN!
ONE CHANCE--!
WHULP!


STAY BACK, MUDWIPES! OR THIS GEEK GETS HIS NECK SNAPPED!
I DON'T HAVE MUCH STRENGTH, BUT BY GOD I HAVE STRENGTH ENOUGH TO DO THAT!
D-D-DO WHAT HE SAYS! DON'T LET HIM HURT ME!
YOU MAY NOT THINK MUCH OF THIS TWERP, BUT I'LL BET YOUR BOSS DOESN'T WANT TO DO WITHOUT HIM!
OKAY, MON. WE'S STILL AS STATUES. YOUR MOVE.
ALL RIGHT, MALUS, WHEEL BACK OUT NICE AND SLOW--!
AHEM!
OH, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! I CAN'T CATCH A BREAK!
YOU JUST THINK YOU'RE GOIN' ANYWHERE, PALLY!
KRRRRK
WHAT'S--
JOHNNY--!!! HOW--?
EEYYAAAH!
NEXT: U.S. AGENT AMOK!

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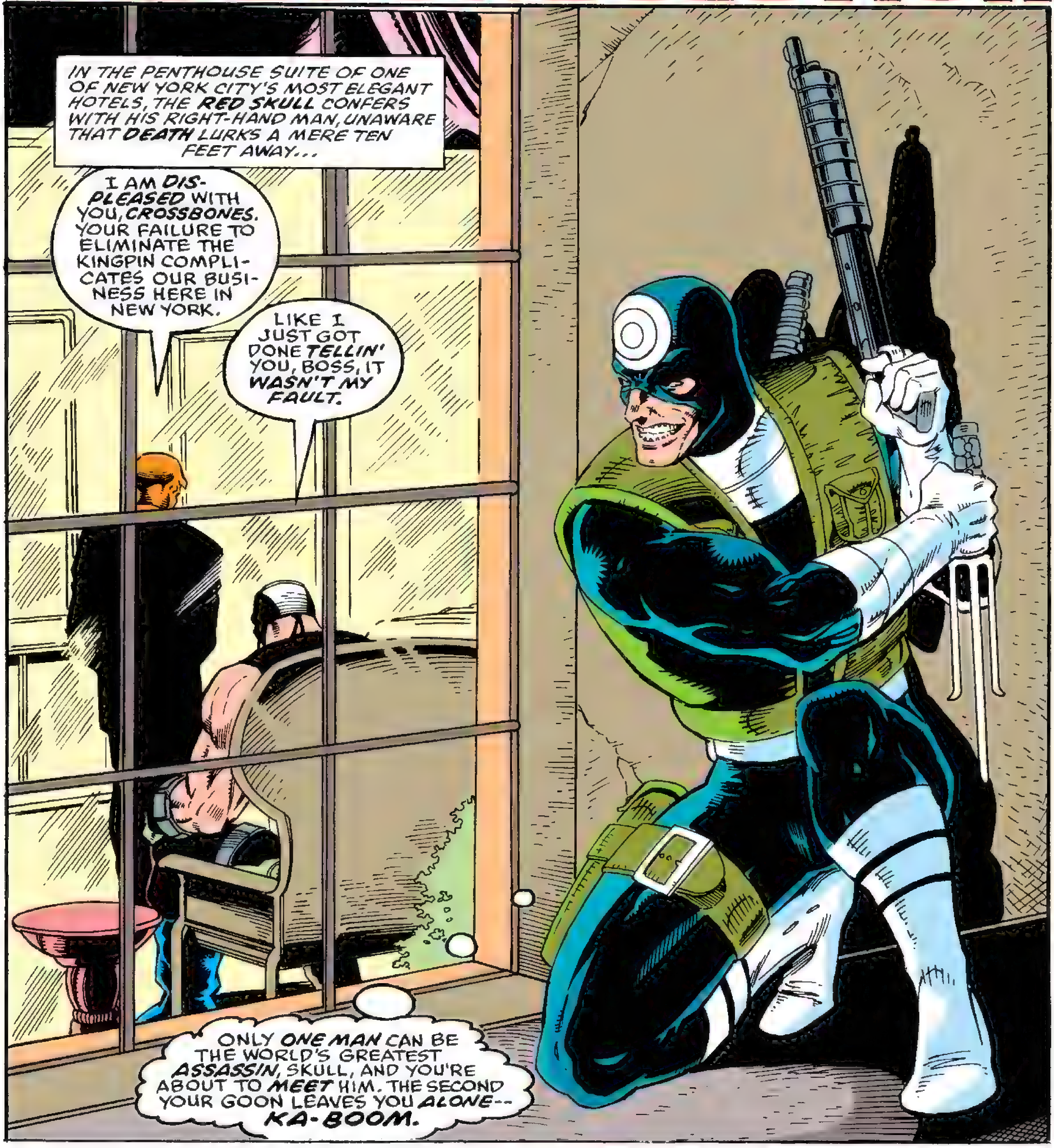
STEVE ROGERS . . . BORN IN THE U.S.A., RAISED TO CHERISH THE IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY, ENDOWED WITH A SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE, AND DRIVEN TO BE THE MOST CAPABLE COMBATANT IN THE WORLD. NOW AS BOTH LONE CRUSADER AND LEADER OF THE RENOWNED AVENGERS, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM! STAN LEE PRESENTS . . . CAPTAIN AMERICA!

THE 100% SOLUTION


IN THE PENTHOUSE SUITE OF ONE OF NEW YORK CITY'S MOST ELEGANT HOTELS, THE RED SKULL CONFERS WITH HIS RIGHT-HAND MAN, UNAWARE THAT DEATH LURKS A MERE TEN FEET AWAY...
I AM DISPLEASED WITH YOU, CROSSBONES. YOUR FAILURE TO ELIMINATE THE KINGPIN COMPLICATES OUR BUSINESS HERE IN NEW YORK.
LIKE I JUST GOT DONE TELLIN' YOU, BOSS, IT WASN'T MY FAULT.
ONLY ONE MAN CAN BE THE WORLD'S GREATEST ASSASSIN, SKULL, AND YOU'RE ABOUT TO MEET HIM. THE SECOND YOUR GOON LEAVES YOU ALONE-- KA-BOOM.

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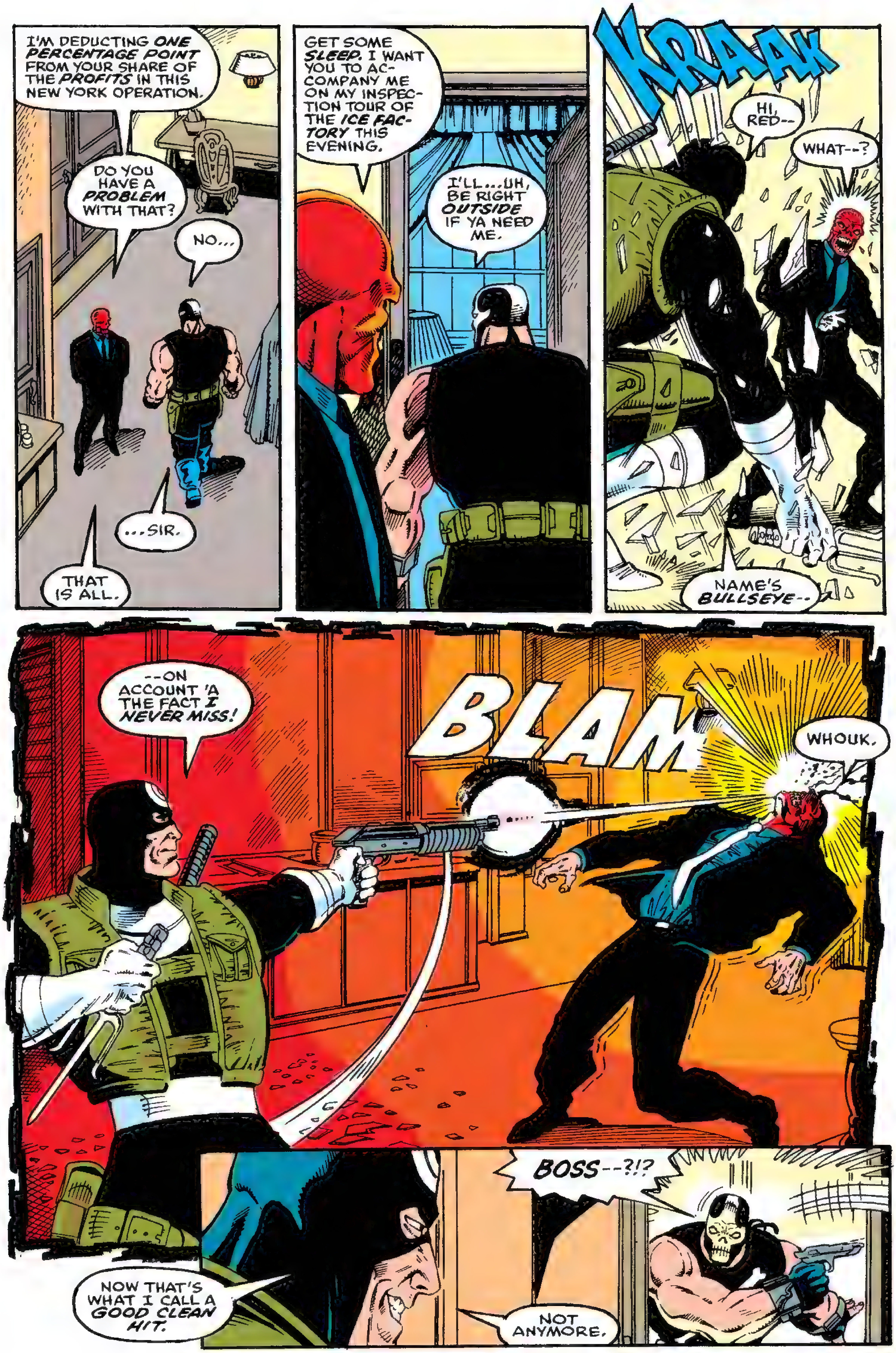
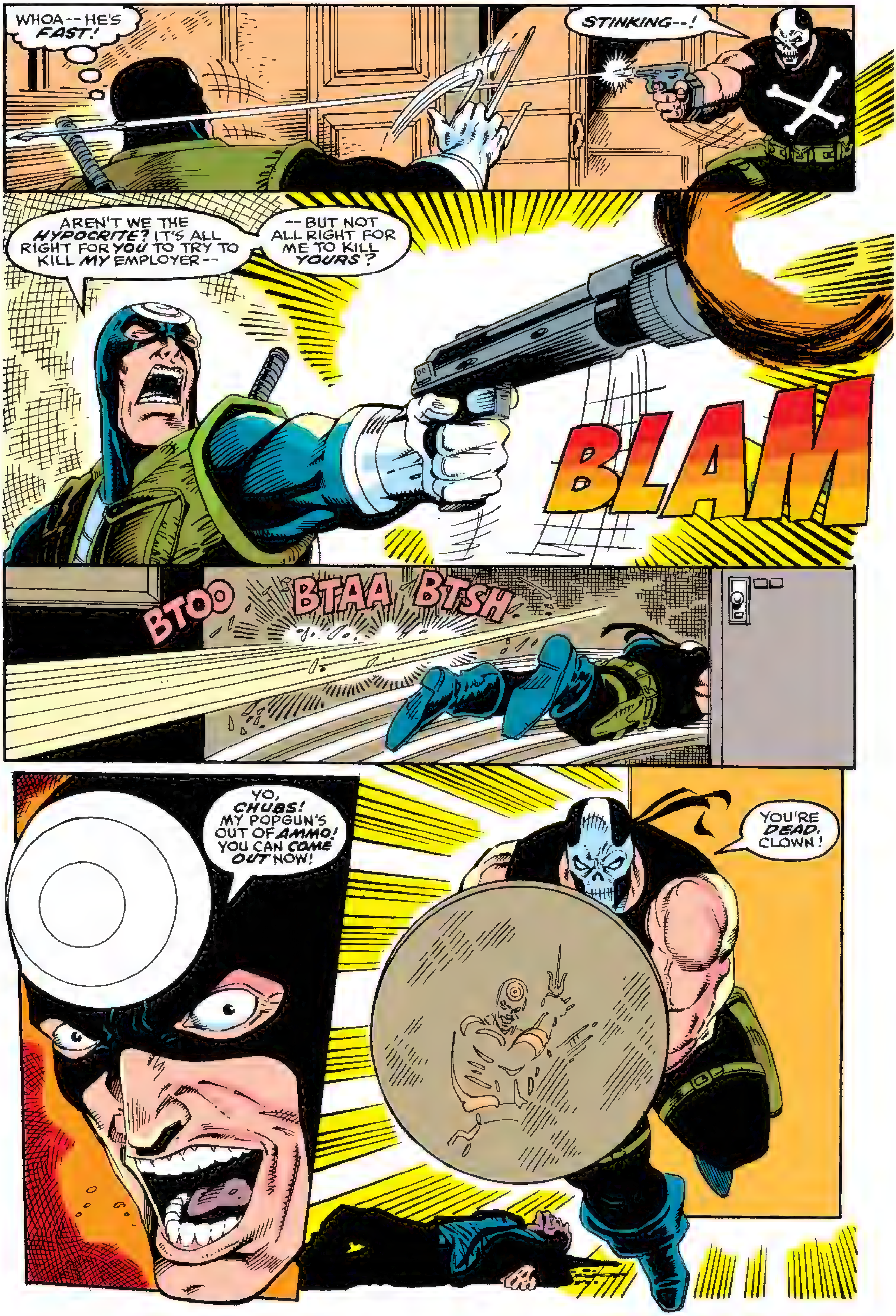
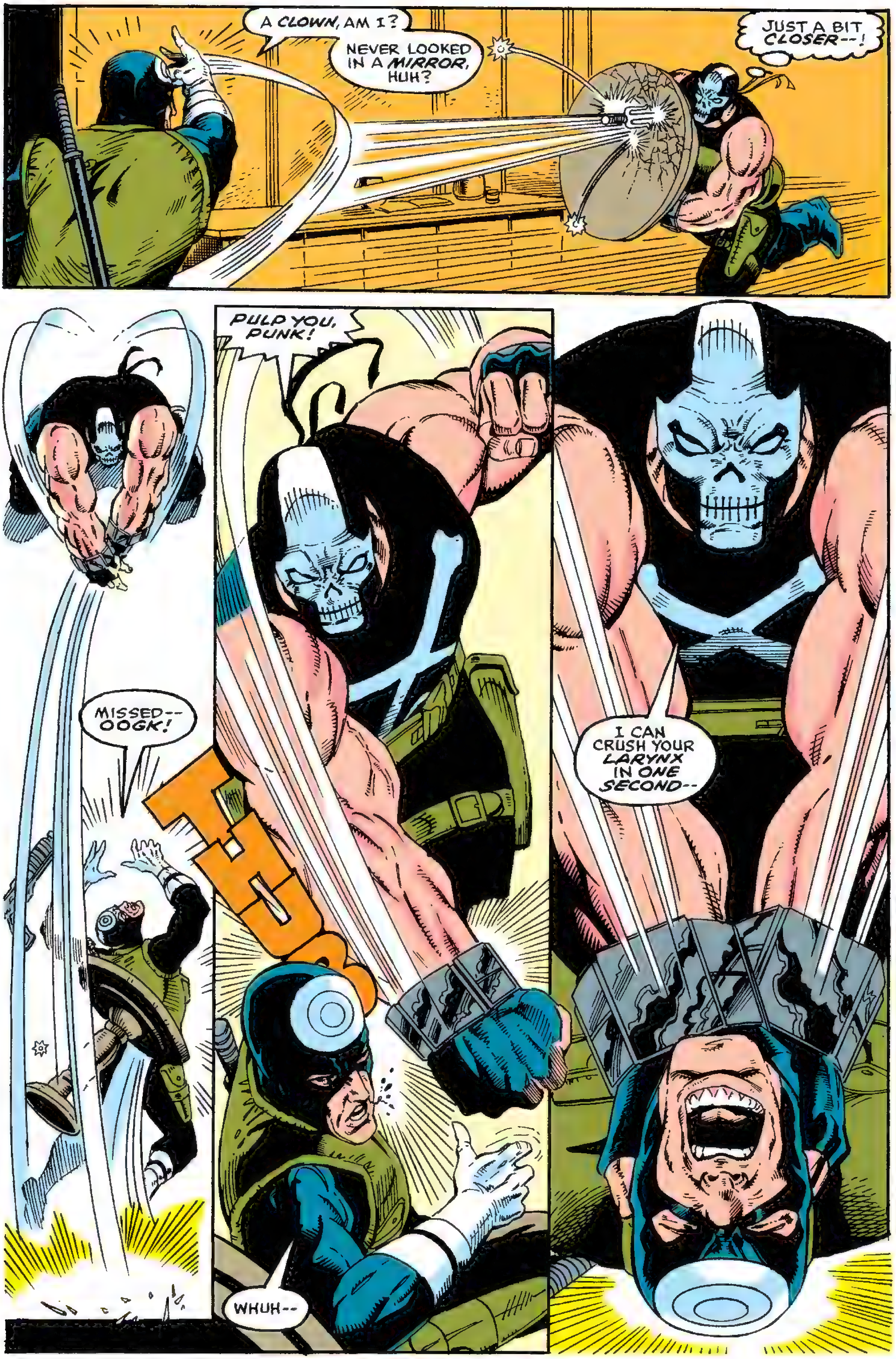
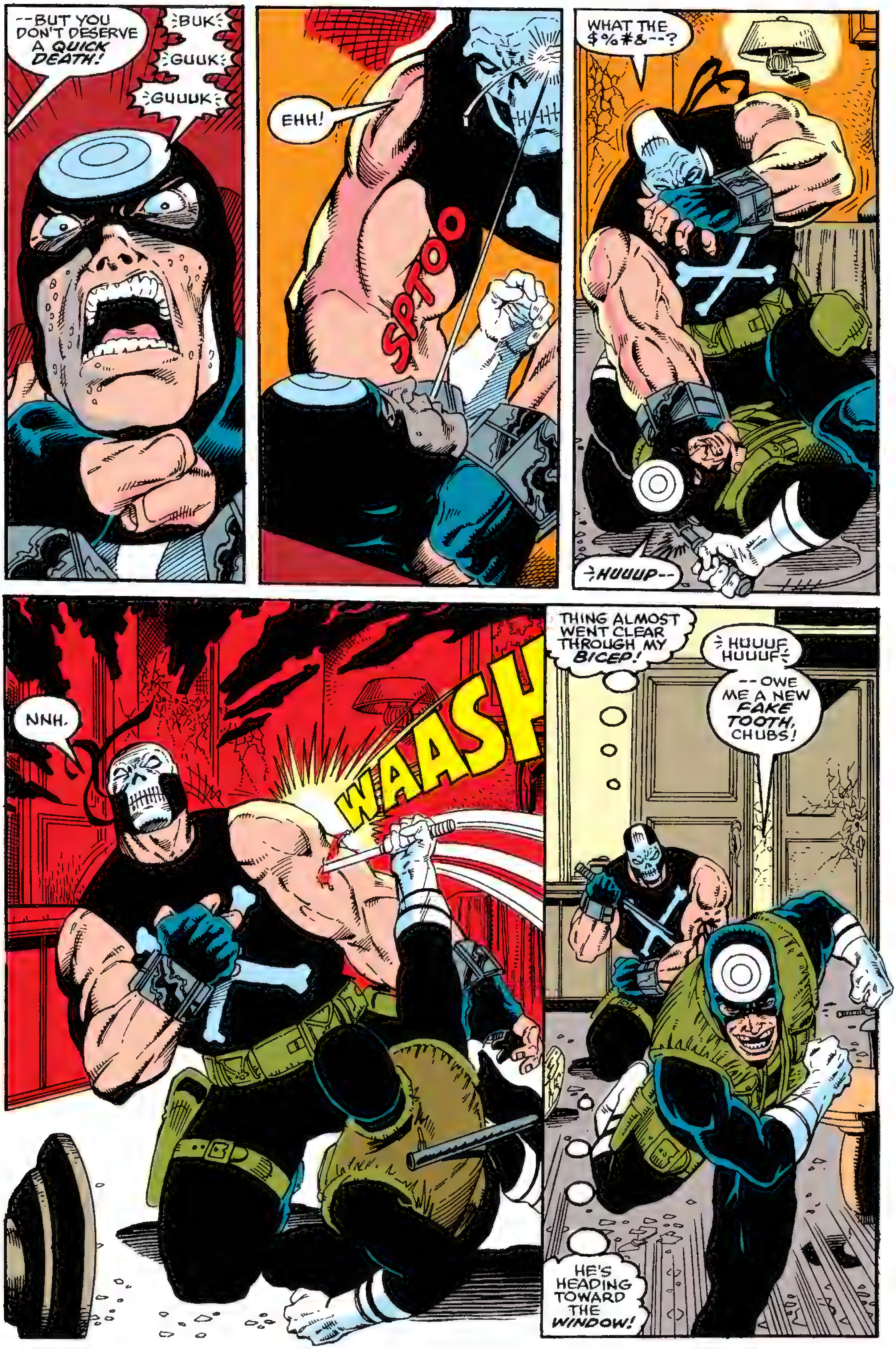
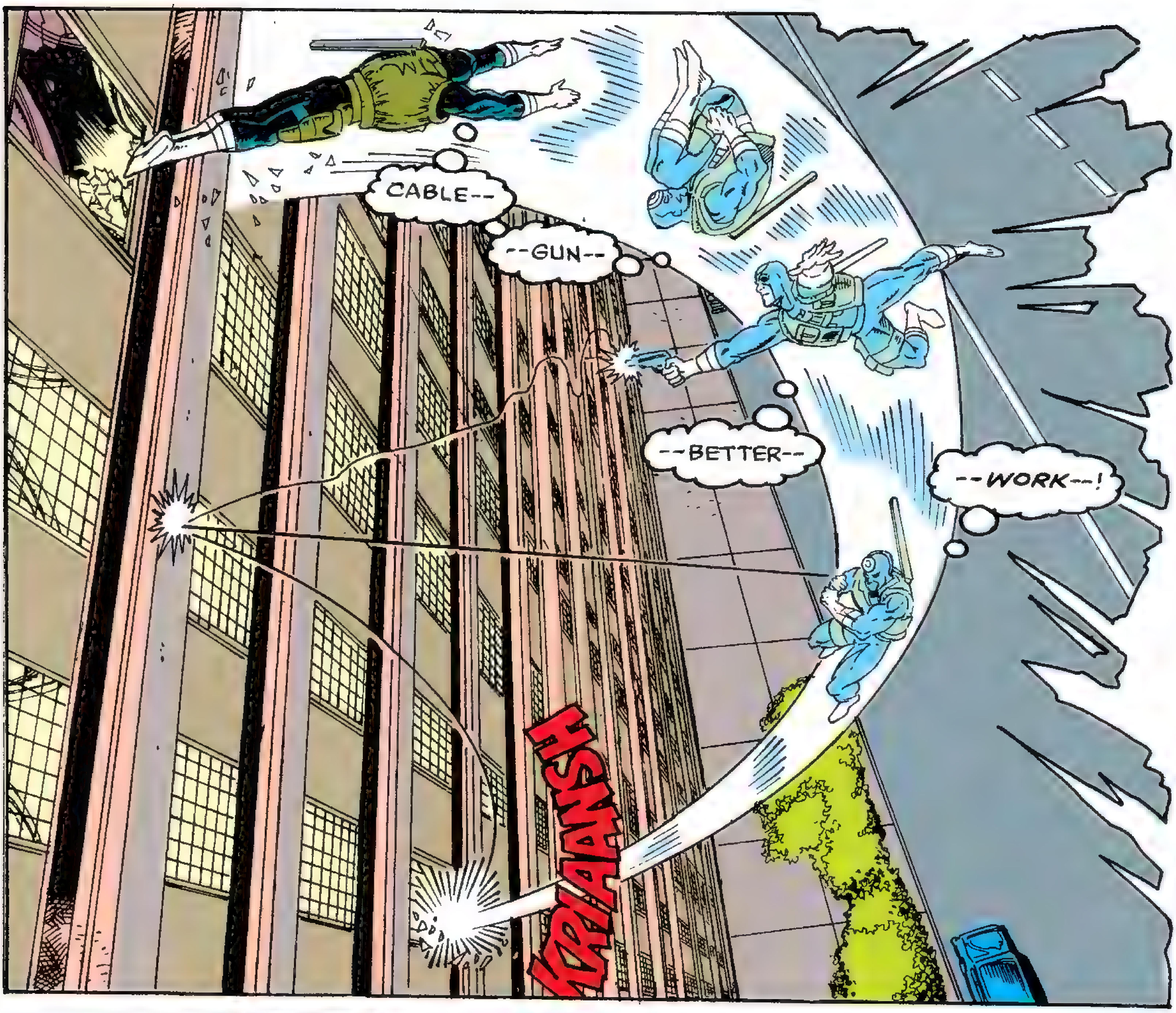
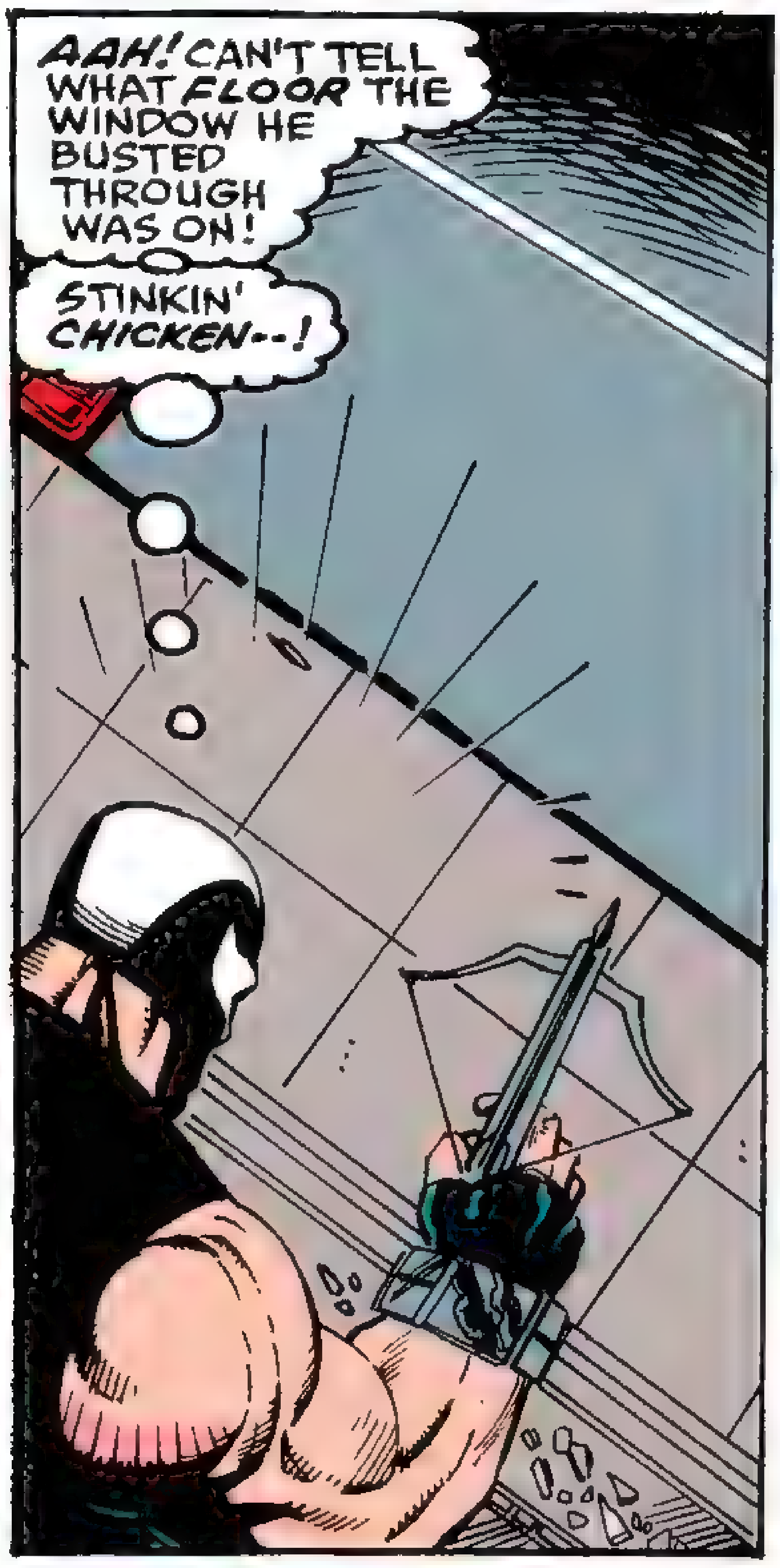

I'M DEDUCTING ONE PERCENTAGE POINT FROM YOUR SHARE OF THE PROFITS IN THIS NEW YORK OPERATION.
DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THAT?
NO...
...SIR.
THAT IS ALL.
GET SOME SLEEP. I WANT YOU TO ACCOMPANY ME ON MY INSPECTION TOUR OF THE ICE FACTORY THIS EVENING.
I'LL...UH, BE RIGHT OUTSIDE IF YA NEED ME.
KRAAAK
HI, RED--
WHAT--?
NAME'S BULLSEYE--
--ON ACCOUNT 'A THE FACT I NEVER MISS!
BLAM
WHOUK.
NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL A GOOD CLEAN HIT.
BOSS--?!?
NOT ANYMORE.

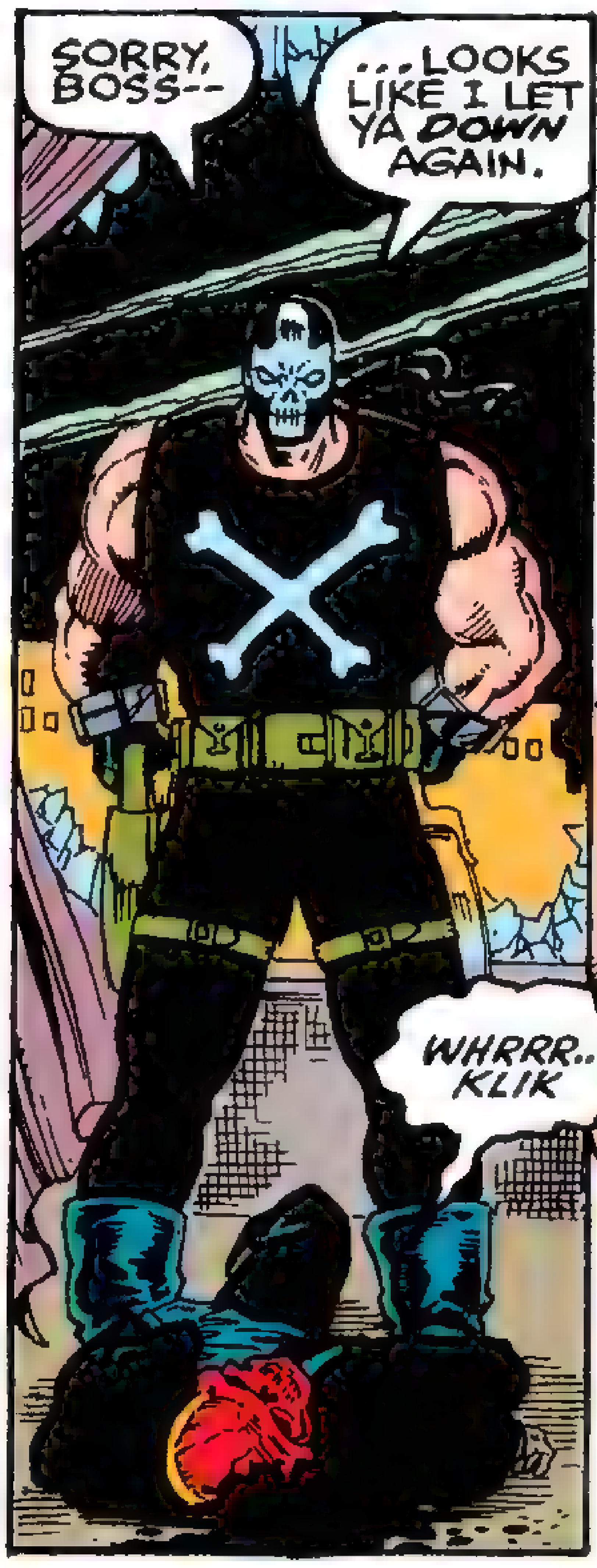

WHOA--HE'S *FAST!*
STINKING--!
AREN'T WE THE *HYPOCRITE?* IT'S ALL RIGHT FOR *YOU* TO TRY TO KILL *MY* EMPLOYER--
--BUT NOT ALL RIGHT FOR ME TO KILL *YOURS?*
BLAM
BTOO
BTAA
BTSH
YO, *CHUBS!* MY POPGUN'S OUT OF *AMMO!* YOU CAN *COME OUT* NOW!
YOU'RE *DEAD,* CLOWN!

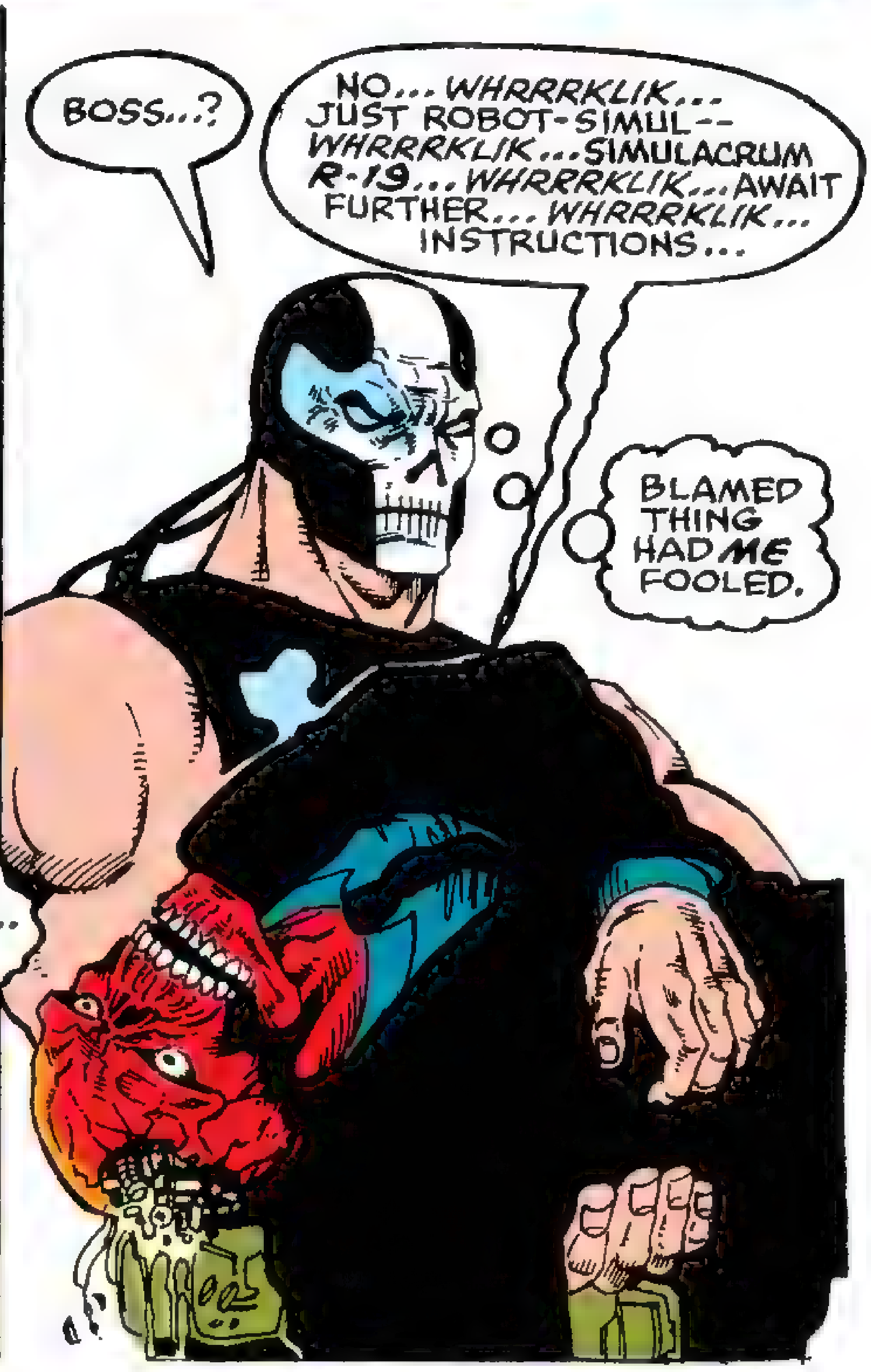

A CLOWN, AM I?
NEVER LOOKED IN A MIRROR, HUH?
JUST A BIT CLOSER--!
MISSED-- OOGK!
PULP YOU, PUNK!
THUD
WHUH--
I CAN CRUSH YOUR LARYNX IN ONE SECOND--

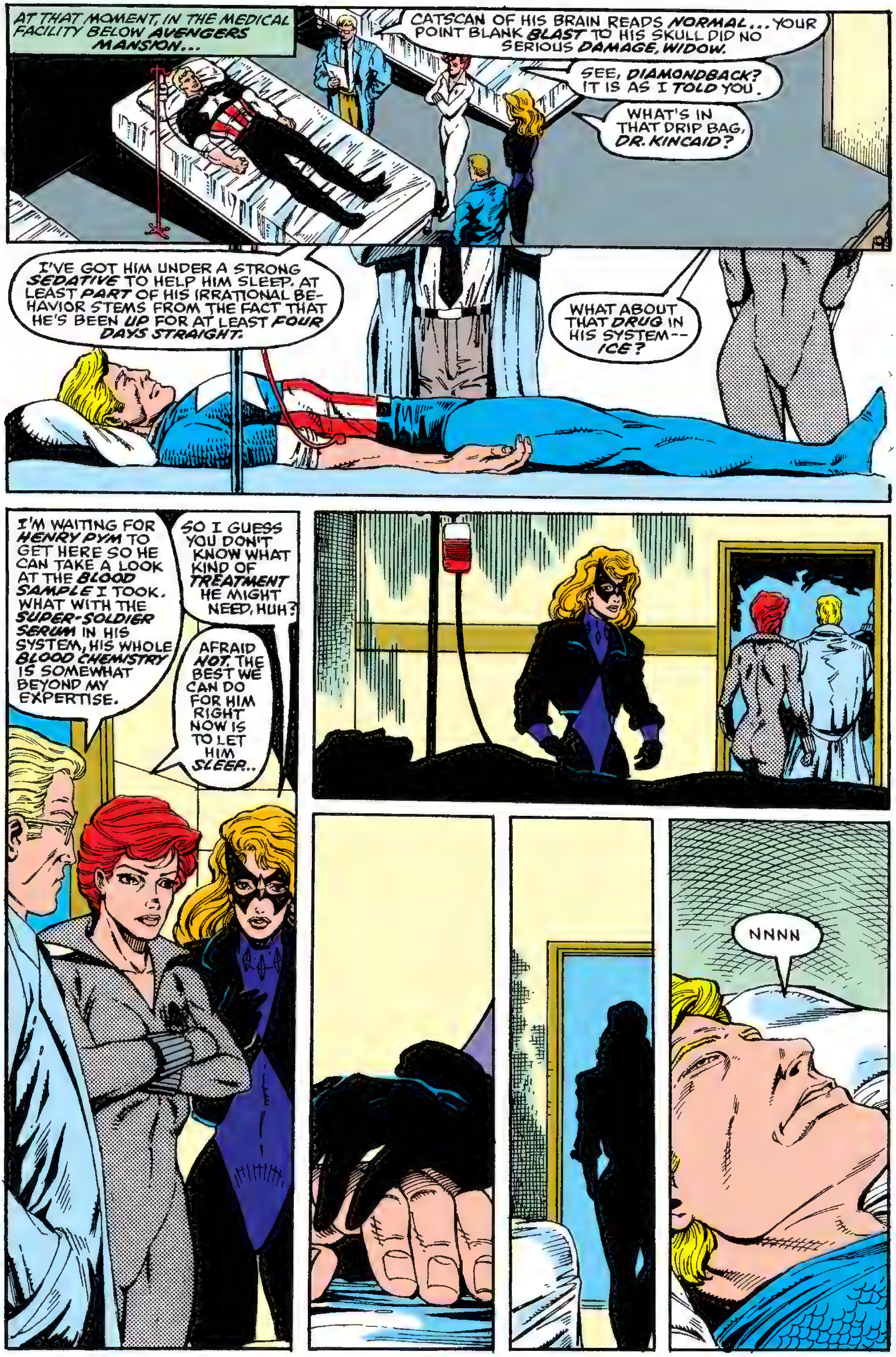

--BUT YOU DON'T DESERVE A *QUICK DEATH!*
BUK
GUUK
GUUUK
EHH!
SPTOO
WHAT THE $%#&--?
HUUUP--
NNH.
WAASH
THING ALMOST WENT CLEAR THROUGH MY *BICEP!*
HUUUF HUUUF
--OWE ME A NEW *FAKE TOOTH,* CHUBS!
HE'S HEADING TOWARD THE *WINDOW!*

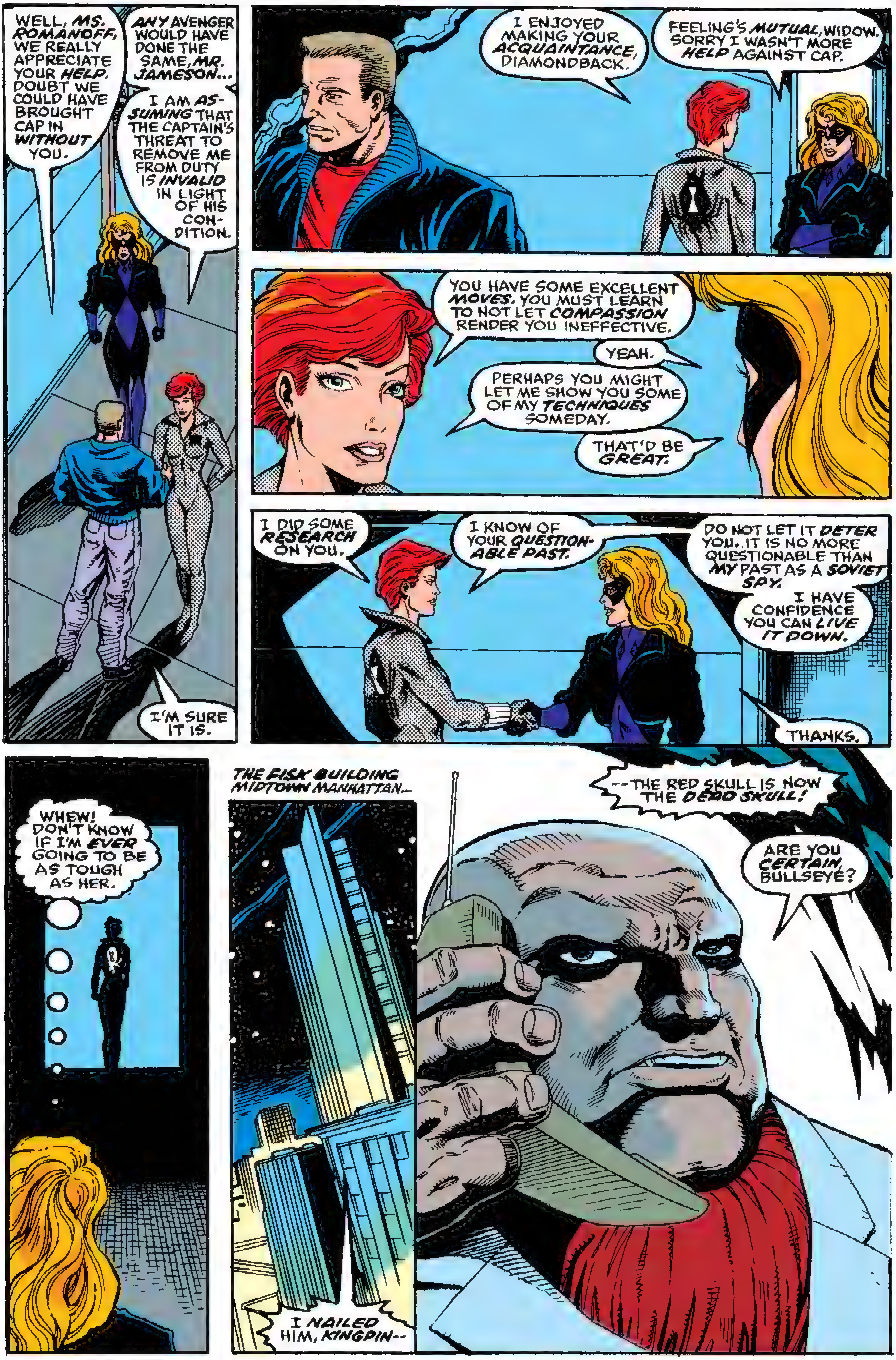

CABLE--
--GUN--
--BETTER--
--WORK--!
KRAAANSH


AAH! CAN'T TELL WHAT FLOOR THE WINDOW HE BUSTED THROUGH WAS ON!
STINKIN' CHICKEN--!

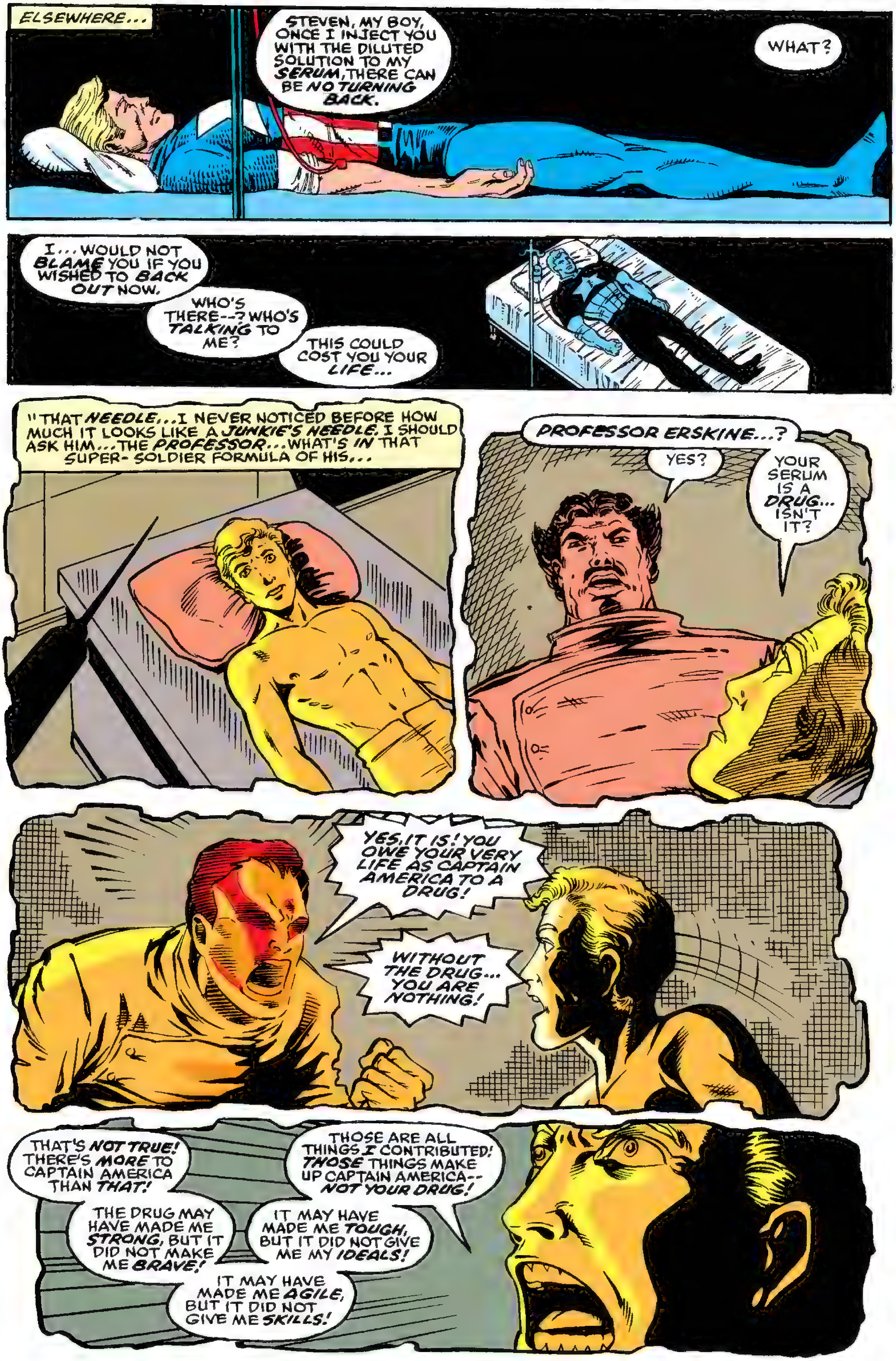

SORRY, BOSS--
...LOOKS LIKE I LET YA DOWN AGAIN.
WHRRR... KLIK

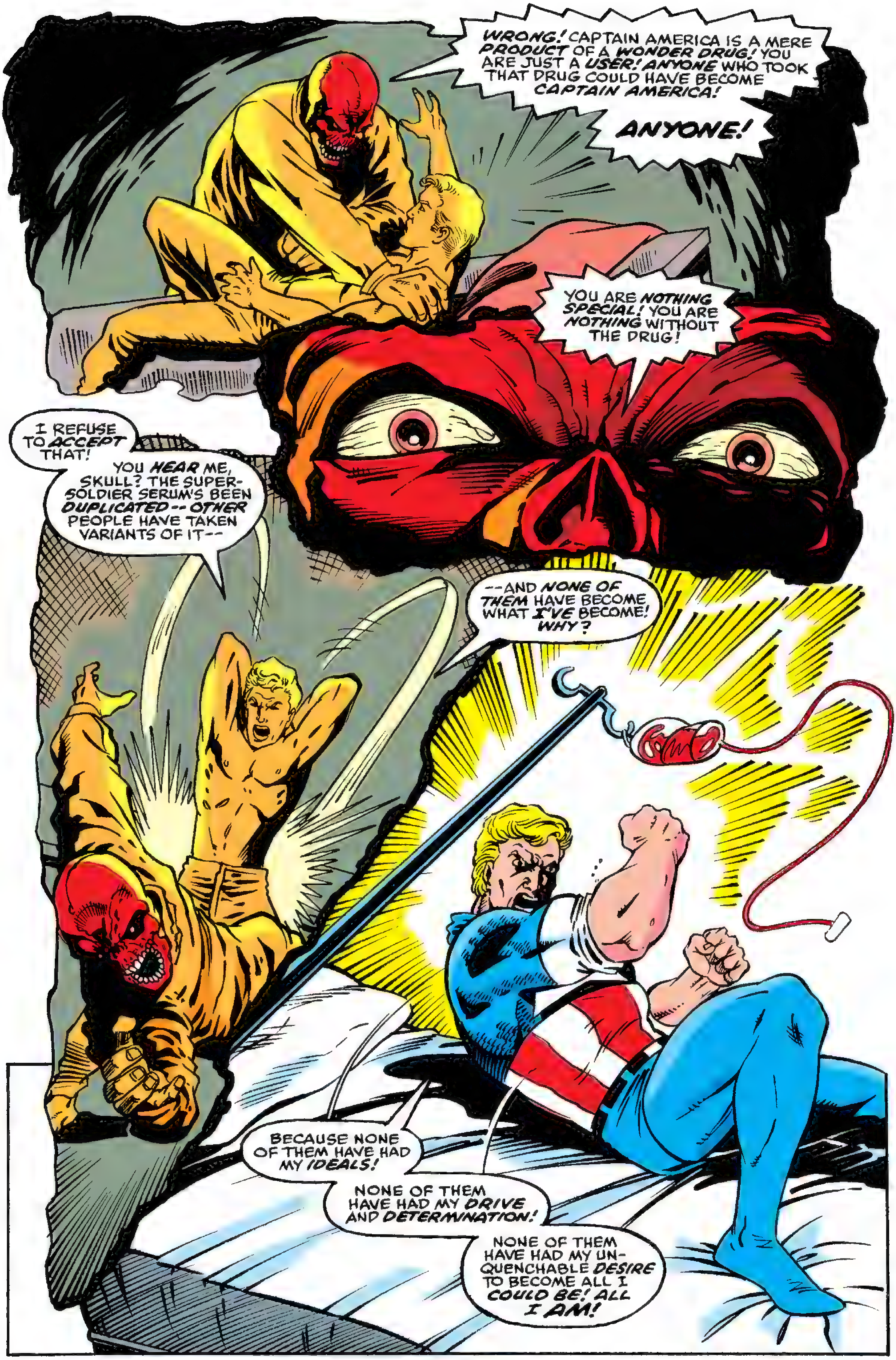

BOSS..?
NO... WHRRRKLIK... JUST ROBOT-SIMUL-- WHRRRKLIK... SIMULACRUM R-19... WHRRRKLIK... AWAIT FURTHER... WHRRRKLIK... INSTRUCTIONS...
BLAMED THING HAD ME FOOLED.

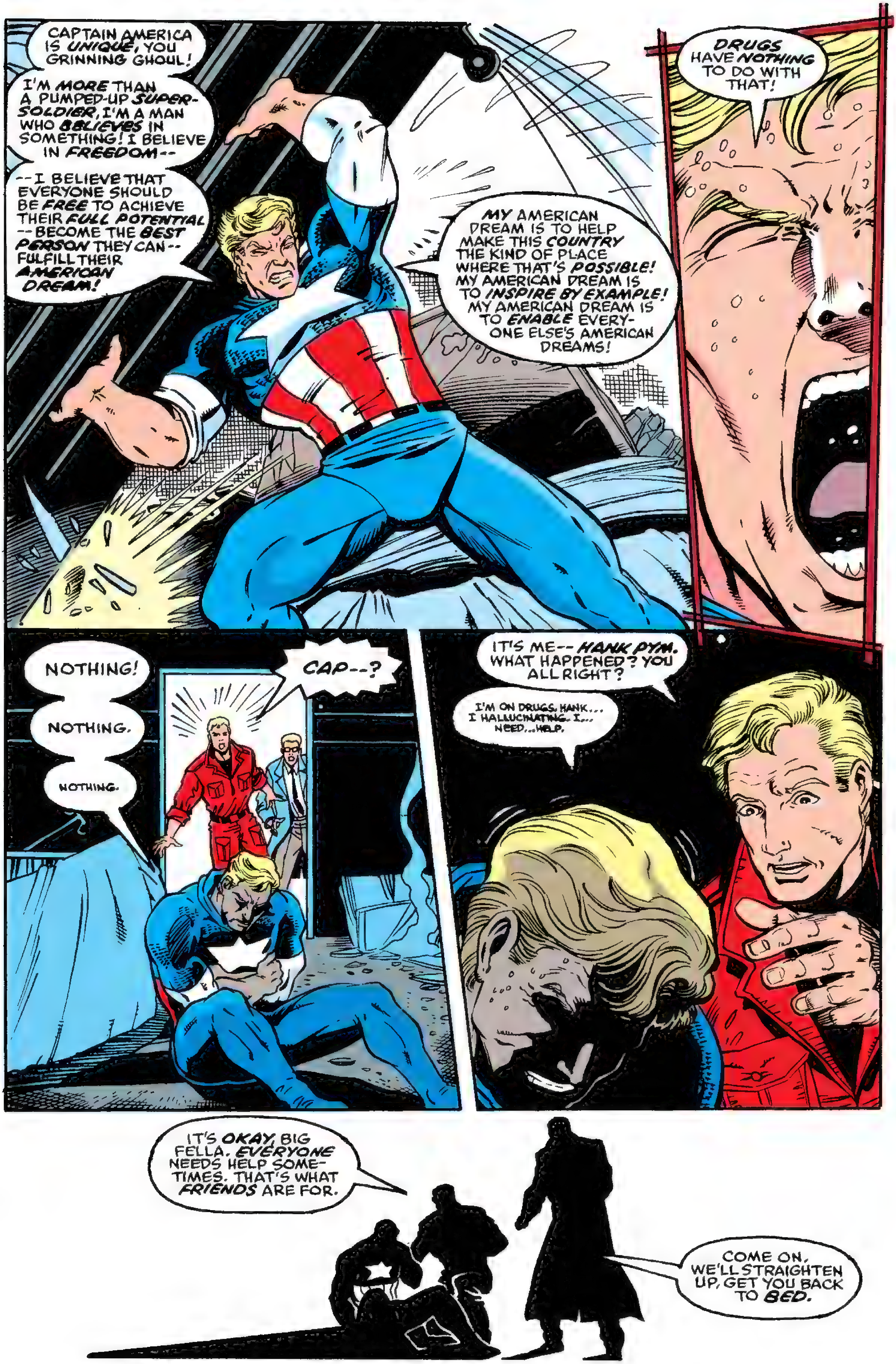

AT THAT MOMENT, IN THE MEDICAL FACILITY BELOW AVENGERS MANSION...
CATSCAN OF HIS BRAIN READS NORMAL... YOUR POINT BLANK BLAST TO HIS SKULL DID NO SERIOUS DAMAGE, WIDOW.
SEE, DIAMONDBACK? IT IS AS I TOLD YOU.
WHAT'S IN THAT DRIP BAG, DR. KINCAID?
I'VE GOT HIM UNDER A STRONG SEDATIVE TO HELP HIM SLEEP. AT LEAST PART OF HIS IRRATIONAL BEHAVIOR STEMS FROM THE FACT THAT HE'S BEEN UP FOR AT LEAST FOUR DAYS STRAIGHT.
WHAT ABOUT THAT DRUG IN HIS SYSTEM-- ICE?
I'M WAITING FOR HENRY PYM TO GET HERE SO HE CAN TAKE A LOOK AT THE BLOOD SAMPLE I TOOK. WHAT WITH THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM IN HIS SYSTEM, HIS WHOLE BLOOD CHEMISTRY IS SOMEWHAT BEYOND MY EXPERTISE.
SO I GUESS YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF TREATMENT HE MIGHT NEED, HUH?
AFRAID NOT. THE BEST WE CAN DO FOR HIM RIGHT NOW IS TO LET HIM SLEEP..
NNNN

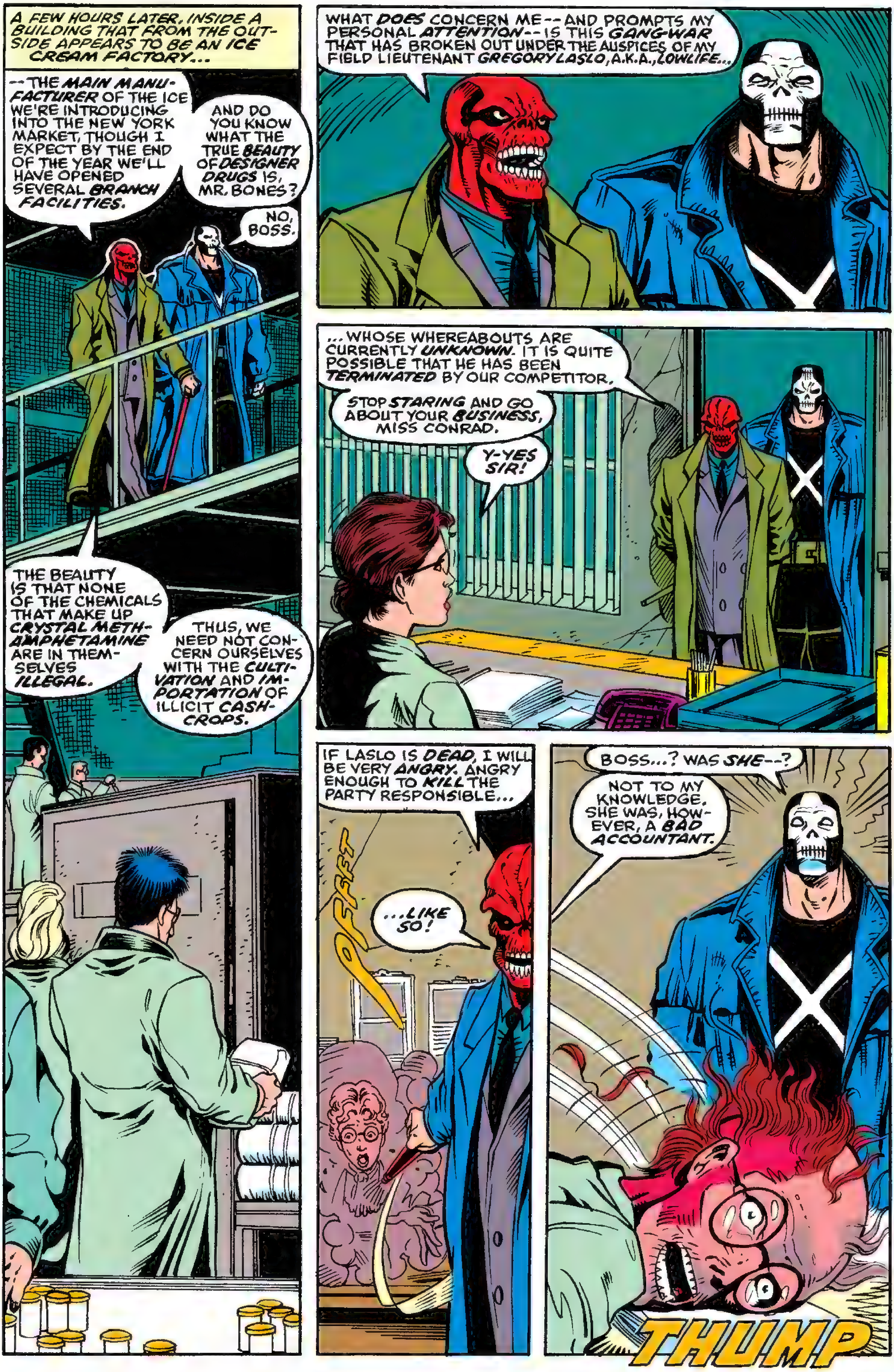

WELL, MS. ROMANOFF, WE REALLY APPRECIATE YOUR HELP. DOUBT WE COULD HAVE BROUGHT CAP IN WITHOUT YOU.
ANY AVENGER WOULD HAVE DONE THE SAME, MR. JAMESON...
I AM ASSUMING THAT THE CAPTAIN'S THREAT TO REMOVE ME FROM DUTY IS INVALID IN LIGHT OF HIS CONDITION.
I'M SURE IT IS.
I ENJOYED MAKING YOUR ACQUAINTANCE, DIAMONDBACK.
FEELING'S MUTUAL, WIDOW. SORRY I WASN'T MORE HELP AGAINST CAP.
YOU HAVE SOME EXCELLENT MOVES. YOU MUST LEARN TO NOT LET COMPASSION RENDER YOU INEFFECTIVE.
YEAH.
PERHAPS YOU MIGHT LET ME SHOW YOU SOME OF MY TECHNIQUES SOMEDAY.
THAT'D BE GREAT.
I DID SOME RESEARCH ON YOU.
I KNOW OF YOUR QUESTIONABLE PAST.
DO NOT LET IT DETER YOU. IT IS NO MORE QUESTIONABLE THAN MY PAST AS A SOVIET SPY.
I HAVE CONFIDENCE YOU CAN LIVE IT DOWN.
THANKS.
WHEW! DON'T KNOW IF I'M EVER GOING TO BE AS TOUGH AS HER.
THE FISK BUILDING MIDTOWN MANHATTAN...
I NAILED HIM, KINGPIN--
--THE RED SKULL IS NOW THE DEAD SKULL!
ARE YOU CERTAIN, BULLSEYE?

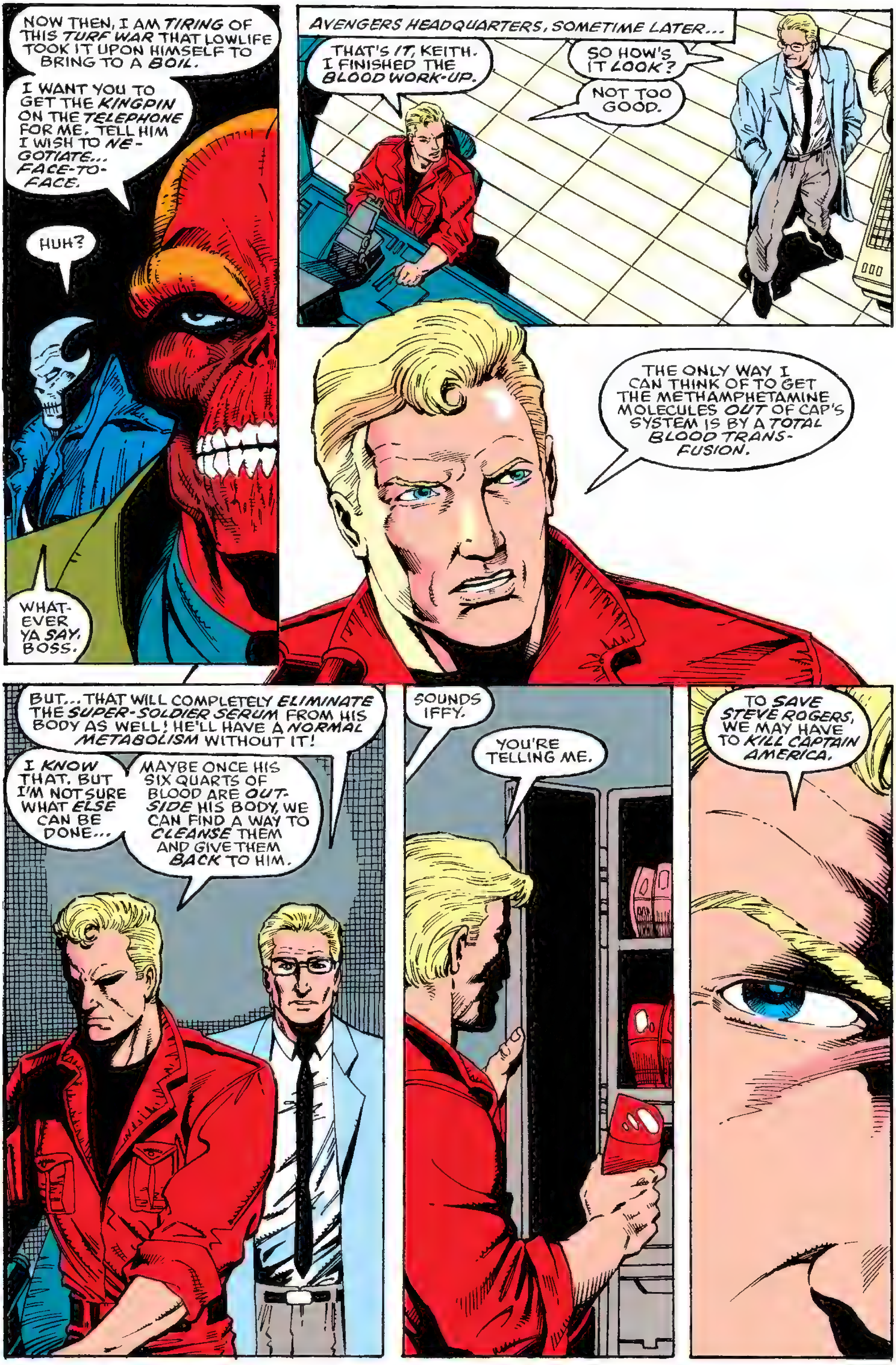
HEY, I-WAS *THERE*, SIR! STUCK A *SHIV* THROUGH THE JOKER THAT TRIED TO SNUFF YOU, TOO-- HIS BODYGUARD *CROSSBONES.*
DIDN'T *KILL* HIM, THOUGH.
THE *MONEY* WILL BE IN THE USUAL PLACE. DROP OUT OF *SIGHT* FOR AT LEAST THREE MONTHS. DO NOT COME HERE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. I'LL SEND *WORD* OUT WHEN I WANT YOU. *UNDERSTAND?*
YEP.
WELL?
BULLSEYE CLAIMS TO HAVE *KILLED* THE RED SKULL.
HMMH! I'D HAVE THOUGHT THE SKULL WOULD HAVE ELIMINATED HIM INSTEAD.
WELL THEN, WITHOUT THE *SKULL*, HIS *ICE OPERATION* SHOULD BE RIPE FOR *TAKE-OVER.*
KINGPIN? WHAT'S *WRONG?*
YOU DON'T *REALLY* THINK THE SKULL'S DEAD, DO YOU?
NOT ON YOUR LIFE, *TYPHOID.*
NOT ON YOUR *LIFE.*
EARLY EVENING OVER NEW YORK...
SO NEXT TIME, YOU THINK YOU COULD *WARN ME* WHEN YOU HAVE MACHINESMITH SEND A *ROBOT* IN YOUR PLACE, BOSS?
YA NEARLY SCARED ME OUT OF A *YEAR'S GROWTH.*
A LITTLE *FRIGHT* NOW AND THEN IS GOOD FOR *EVERYONE,* MR. BONES.
THE ATTEMPTED HIT ON MY *SURROGATE* AT MY CUSTOMARY ACCOMMODATIONS DEMONSTRATES TO ME WHAT I WISHED TO *KNOW...*
...THAT THE KINGPIN'S *INTELLIGENCE NETWORK* MUST BE NEARLY AS *VAST* AS MY OWN. APPARENTLY THE KINGPIN HAS A MOLE SOMEWHERE WITHIN *MY* ORGANIZATION EVEN AS I DO IN *HIS.*
I WILL BE AT *HANGAR 13* IN NEWARK IN APPROXIMATELY 20 MINUTES. DON'T KEEP ME *WAITING.*

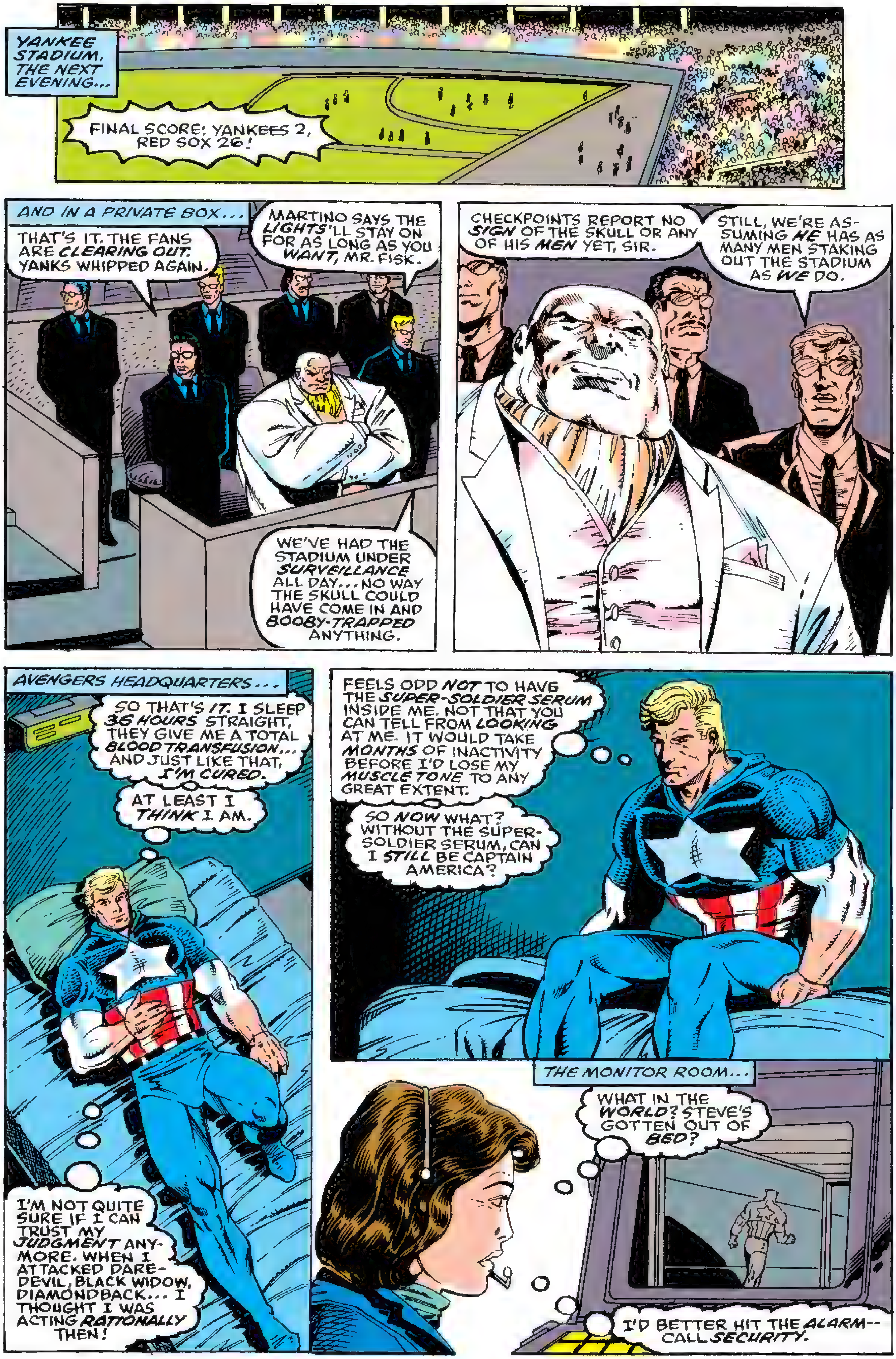

ELSEWHERE...
STEVEN, MY BOY, ONCE I INJECT YOU WITH THE DILUTED SOLUTION TO MY SERUM, THERE CAN BE NO TURNING BACK.
WHAT?
I... WOULD NOT BLAME YOU IF YOU WISHED TO BACK OUT NOW.
WHO'S THERE--? WHO'S TALKING TO ME?
THIS COULD COST YOU YOUR LIFE...
"THAT NEEDLE... I NEVER NOTICED BEFORE HOW MUCH IT LOOKS LIKE A JUNKIE'S NEEDLE. I SHOULD ASK HIM... THE PROFESSOR... WHAT'S IN THAT SUPER- SOLDIER FORMULA OF HIS...
PROFESSOR ERSKINE...?
YES?
YOUR SERUM IS A DRUG... ISN'T IT?
YES, IT IS! YOU OWE YOUR VERY LIFE AS CAPTAIN AMERICA TO A DRUG!
WITHOUT THE DRUG... YOU ARE NOTHING!
THAT'S NOT TRUE! THERE'S MORE TO CAPTAIN AMERICA THAN THAT!
THE DRUG MAY HAVE MADE ME STRONG, BUT IT DID NOT MAKE ME BRAVE!
IT MAY HAVE MADE ME AGILE, BUT IT DID NOT GIVE ME SKILLS!
IT MAY HAVE MADE ME TOUGH, BUT IT DID NOT GIVE ME MY IDEALS!
THOSE ARE ALL THINGS I CONTRIBUTED! THOSE THINGS MAKE UP CAPTAIN AMERICA-- NOT YOUR DRUG!

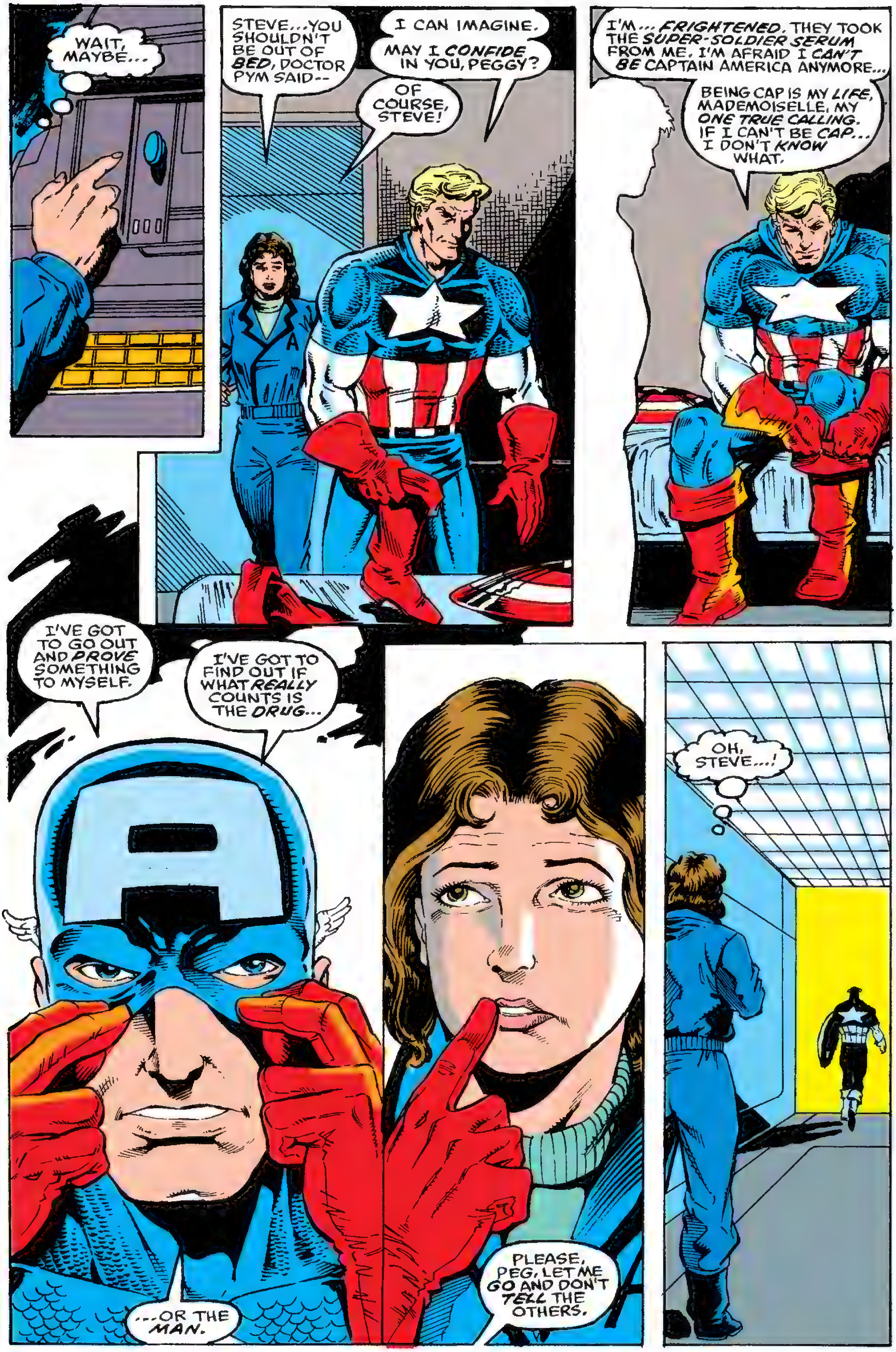

WRONG! CAPTAIN AMERICA IS A MERE PRODUCT OF A WONDER DRUG! YOU ARE JUST A USER! ANYONE WHO TOOK THAT DRUG COULD HAVE BECOME CAPTAIN AMERICA!
ANYONE!
YOU ARE NOTHING SPECIAL! YOU ARE NOTHING WITHOUT THE DRUG!
I REFUSE TO ACCEPT THAT!
YOU HEAR ME, SKULL? THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM'S BEEN DUPLICATED -- OTHER PEOPLE HAVE TAKEN VARIANTS OF IT --
-- AND NONE OF THEM HAVE BECOME WHAT I'VE BECOME! WHY?
BECAUSE NONE OF THEM HAVE HAD MY IDEALS!
NONE OF THEM HAVE HAD MY DRIVE AND DETERMINATION!
NONE OF THEM HAVE HAD MY UNQUENCHABLE DESIRE TO BECOME ALL I COULD BE! ALL I AM!

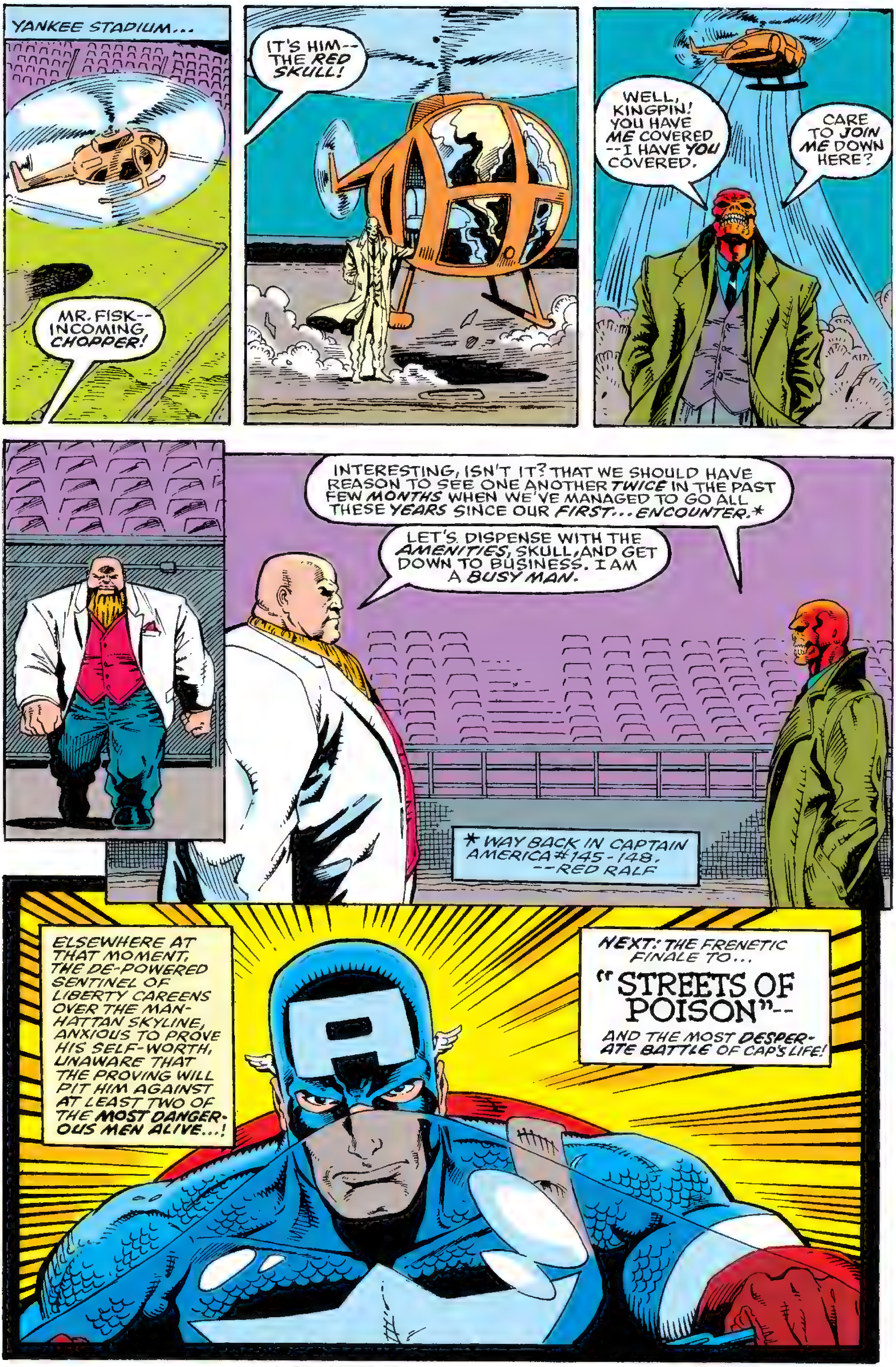

CAPTAIN AMERICA IS *UNIQUE*, YOU GRINNING GHOUL!
I'M *MORE* THAN A PUMPED-UP *SUPER-SOLDIER*, I'M A MAN WHO *BELIEVES* IN SOMETHING! I BELIEVE IN *FREEDOM*--
--I BELIEVE THAT EVERYONE SHOULD BE *FREE* TO ACHIEVE THEIR *FULL POTENTIAL* --BECOME THE *BEST PERSON* THEY CAN-- FULFILL THEIR *AMERICAN DREAM!*
MY AMERICAN DREAM IS TO HELP MAKE THIS *COUNTRY* THE KIND OF PLACE WHERE THAT'S *POSSIBLE!* MY AMERICAN DREAM IS TO *INSPIRE BY EXAMPLE!* MY AMERICAN DREAM IS TO *ENABLE* EVERYONE ELSE'S AMERICAN DREAMS!
DRUGS HAVE *NOTHING* TO DO WITH THAT!
NOTHING!
NOTHING.
NOTHING.
CAP--?
IT'S ME-- *HANK PYM.* WHAT HAPPENED? YOU ALL RIGHT?
I'M ON DRUGS, HANK... I HALLUCINATING. I... NEED...HELP.
IT'S *OKAY*, BIG FELLA. *EVERYONE* NEEDS HELP SOMETIMES. THAT'S WHAT *FRIENDS* ARE FOR.
COME ON, WE'LL STRAIGHTEN UP, GET YOU BACK TO *BED.*


A FEW HOURS LATER, INSIDE A BUILDING THAT FROM THE OUTSIDE APPEARS TO BE AN ICE CREAM FACTORY...
--THE MAIN MANUFACTURER OF THE ICE WE'RE INTRODUCING INTO THE NEW YORK MARKET, THOUGH I EXPECT BY THE END OF THE YEAR WE'LL HAVE OPENED SEVERAL BRANCH FACILITIES.
AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE TRUE BEAUTY OF DESIGNER DRUGS IS, MR. BONES?
NO, BOSS.
THE BEAUTY IS THAT NONE OF THE CHEMICALS THAT MAKE UP CRYSTAL METHAMPHETAMINE ARE IN THEMSELVES ILLEGAL.
THUS, WE NEED NOT CONCERN OURSELVES WITH THE CULTIVATION AND IMPORTATION OF ILLICIT CASH-CROPS.
WHAT DOES CONCERN ME--AND PROMPTS MY PERSONAL ATTENTION--IS THIS GANG-WAR THAT HAS BROKEN OUT UNDER THE AUSPICES OF MY FIELD LIEUTENANT GREGORY LASLO, A.K.A., LOWLIFE...
...WHOSE WHEREABOUTS ARE CURRENTLY UNKNOWN. IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT HE HAS BEEN TERMINATED BY OUR COMPETITOR.
STOP STARING AND GO ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS, MISS CONRAD.
Y-YES SIR!
IF LASLO IS DEAD, I WILL BE VERY ANGRY. ANGRY ENOUGH TO KILL THE PARTY RESPONSIBLE...
OFFFT
...LIKE SO!
BOSS...? WAS SHE--?
NOT TO MY KNOWLEDGE. SHE WAS, HOWEVER, A BAD ACCOUNTANT.
THUMP


NOW THEN, I AM *TIRING* OF THIS *TURF WAR* THAT LOWLIFE TOOK IT UPON HIMSELF TO BRING TO A *BOIL*.
I WANT YOU TO GET THE *KINGPIN* ON THE *TELEPHONE* FOR ME. TELL HIM I WISH TO *NEGOTIATE... FACE-TO-FACE*.
HUH?
WHATEVER YA *SAY*, BOSS.
AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS, SOMETIME LATER...
THAT'S *IT*, KEITH. I FINISHED THE *BLOOD WORK-UP*.
SO HOW'S IT *LOOK*?
NOT TOO GOOD.
THE ONLY WAY I CAN THINK OF TO GET THE METHAMPHETAMINE MOLECULES *OUT* OF CAP'S SYSTEM IS BY A *TOTAL BLOOD TRANSFUSION*.
BUT... THAT WILL COMPLETELY *ELIMINATE* THE *SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM* FROM HIS BODY AS WELL! HE'LL HAVE A *NORMAL METABOLISM* WITHOUT IT!
I *KNOW* THAT. BUT I'M NOT SURE WHAT *ELSE* CAN BE DONE...
MAYBE ONCE HIS SIX QUARTS OF BLOOD ARE *OUTSIDE* HIS BODY, WE CAN FIND A WAY TO *CLEANSE* THEM AND GIVE THEM *BACK* TO HIM.
SOUNDS IFFY.
YOU'RE TELLING ME.
TO *SAVE STEVE ROGERS*, WE MAY HAVE TO *KILL CAPTAIN AMERICA*.

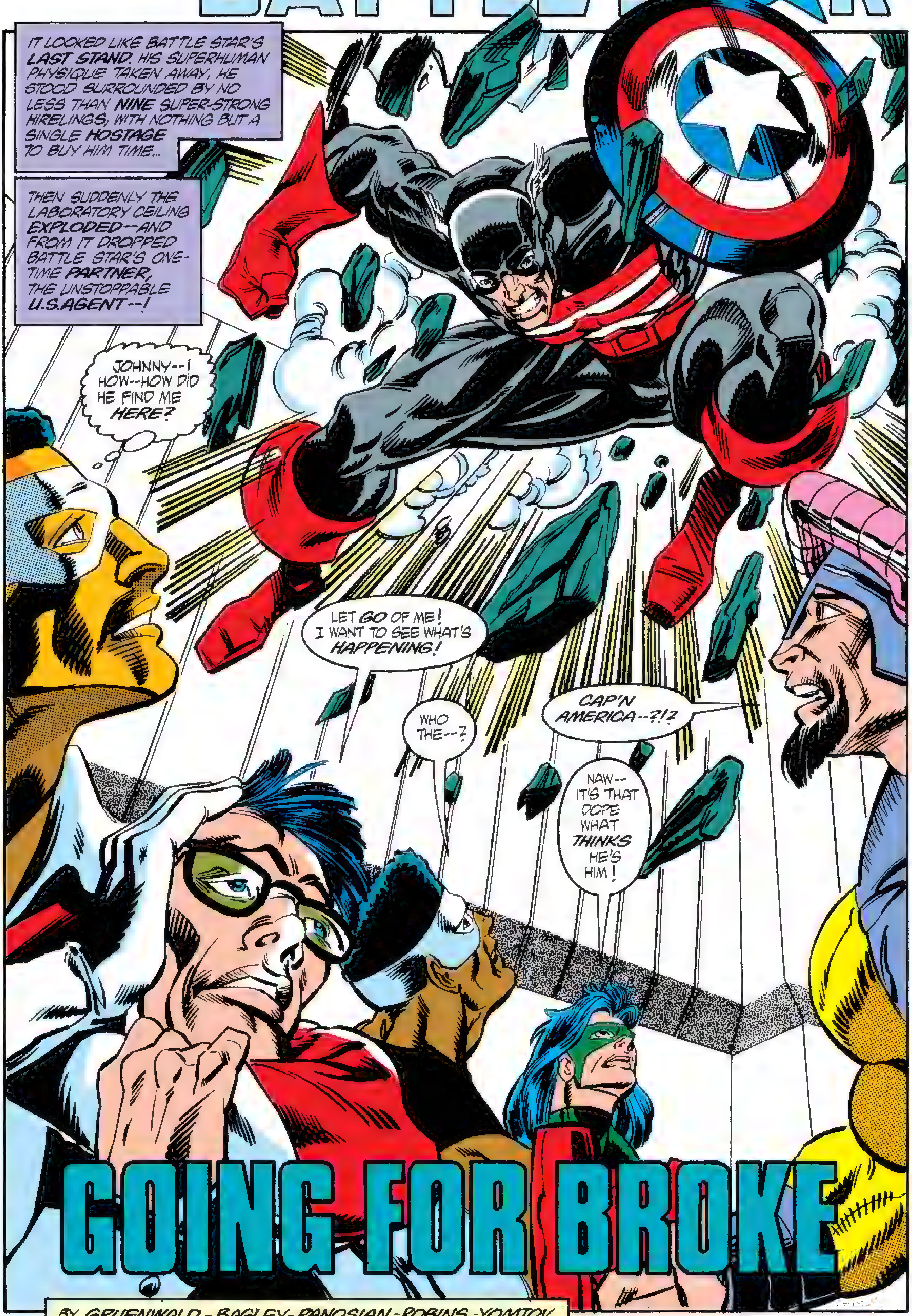

YANKEE STADIUM, THE NEXT EVENING...
FINAL SCORE: YANKEES 2, RED SOX 26!
AND IN A PRIVATE BOX...
THAT'S IT. THE FANS ARE *CLEARING OUT.* YANKS WHIPPED AGAIN.
MARTINO SAYS THE *LIGHTS*'LL STAY ON FOR AS LONG AS YOU *WANT,* MR. FISK.
WE'VE HAD THE STADIUM UNDER *SURVEILLANCE* ALL DAY... NO WAY THE SKULL COULD HAVE COME IN AND *BOOBY-TRAPPED* ANYTHING.
CHECKPOINTS REPORT NO *SIGN* OF THE SKULL OR ANY OF HIS *MEN* YET, SIR.
STILL, WE'RE ASSUMING *HE* HAS AS MANY MEN STAKING OUT THE STADIUM AS *WE* DO.
AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS...
SO THAT'S *IT.* I SLEEP *36 HOURS* STRAIGHT, THEY GIVE ME A TOTAL *BLOOD TRANSFUSION*... AND JUST LIKE THAT, *I'M CURED.*
AT LEAST I *THINK* I AM.
I'M NOT QUITE SURE IF I CAN TRUST MY *JUDGMENT* ANYMORE. WHEN I ATTACKED DAREDEVIL, BLACK WIDOW, DIAMONDBACK... I THOUGHT I WAS ACTING *RATIONALLY* THEN!
FEELS ODD *NOT* TO HAVE THE *SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM* INSIDE ME. NOT THAT YOU CAN TELL FROM *LOOKING* AT ME. IT WOULD TAKE *MONTHS* OF INACTIVITY BEFORE I'D LOSE MY *MUSCLE TONE* TO ANY GREAT EXTENT.
SO *NOW* WHAT? WITHOUT THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM, CAN I *STILL* BE CAPTAIN AMERICA?
THE MONITOR ROOM...
WHAT IN THE *WORLD*? STEVE'S GOTTEN OUT OF *BED*?
I'D BETTER HIT THE *ALARM*-- CALL *SECURITY.*


WAIT, MAYBE...
STEVE...YOU SHOULDN'T BE OUT OF *BED*, DOCTOR PYM SAID--
I CAN IMAGINE.
MAY I *CONFIDE* IN YOU, PEGGY?
OF COURSE, STEVE!
I'M... *FRIGHTENED*. THEY TOOK THE *SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM* FROM ME. I'M AFRAID I *CAN'T BE* CAPTAIN AMERICA ANYMORE...
BEING CAP IS MY *LIFE*, MADEMOISELLE. MY *ONE TRUE CALLING*. IF I CAN'T BE *CAP*... I DON'T *KNOW* WHAT.
I'VE GOT TO GO OUT AND *PROVE* SOMETHING TO MYSELF.
I'VE GOT TO FIND OUT IF WHAT *REALLY* COUNTS IS THE *DRUG*...
...OR THE *MAN*.
PLEASE, PEG, LET ME *GO* AND DON'T *TELL* THE OTHERS.
OH, STEVE...!


YANKEE STADIUM...
MR. FISK--INCOMING CHOPPER!
IT'S HIM--THE RED SKULL!
WELL, KINGPIN! YOU HAVE ME COVERED--I HAVE YOU COVERED.
CARE TO JOIN ME DOWN HERE?
INTERESTING, ISN'T IT? THAT WE SHOULD HAVE REASON TO SEE ONE ANOTHER TWICE IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS WHEN WE'VE MANAGED TO GO ALL THESE YEARS SINCE OUR FIRST... ENCOUNTER.*
LET'S DISPENSE WITH THE AMENITIES, SKULL, AND GET DOWN TO BUSINESS. I AM A BUSY MAN.
* WAY BACK IN CAPTAIN AMERICA #145-148. --RED RALF
ELSEWHERE AT THAT MOMENT, THE DE-POWERED SENTINEL OF LIBERTY CAREENS OVER THE MANHATTAN SKYLINE, ANXIOUS TO PROVE HIS SELF-WORTH, UNAWARE THAT THE PROVING WILL PIT HIM AGAINST AT LEAST TWO OF THE MOST DANGEROUS MEN ALIVE...!
NEXT: THE FRENETIC FINALE TO... "STREETS OF POISON"-- AND THE MOST DESPERATE BATTLE OF CAP'S LIFE!

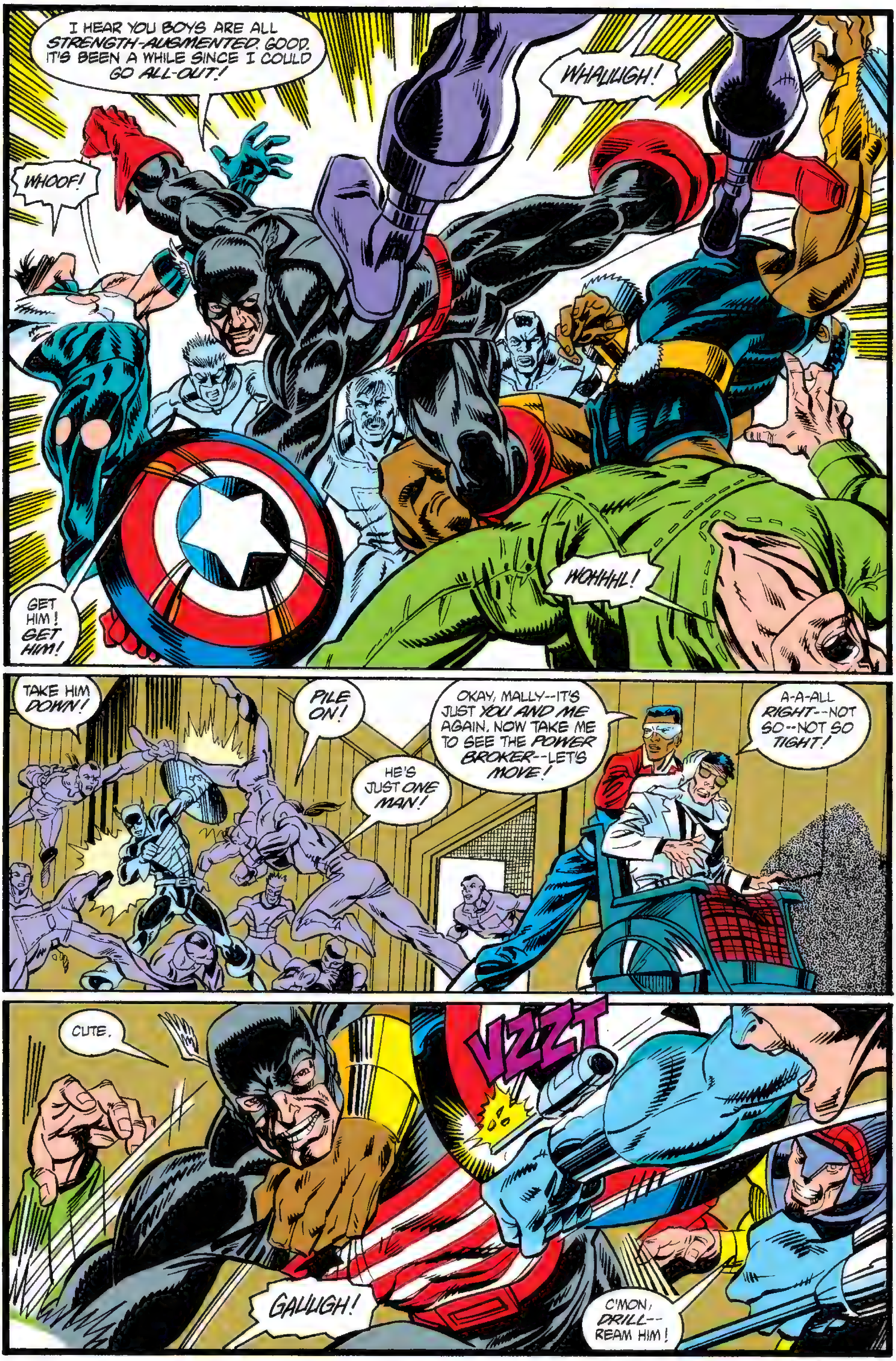
Stan Lee PRESENTS:

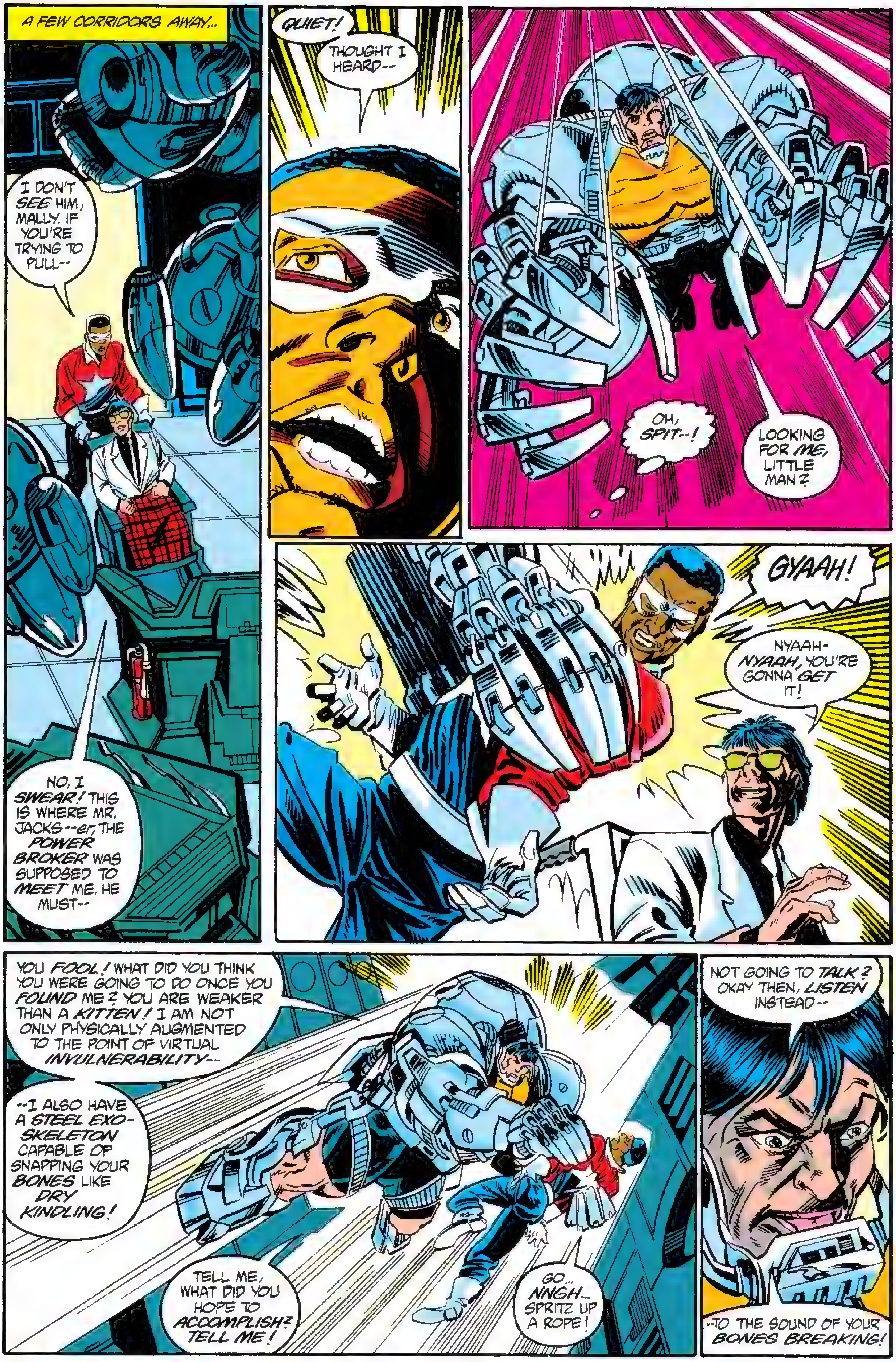
BATTLE STAR

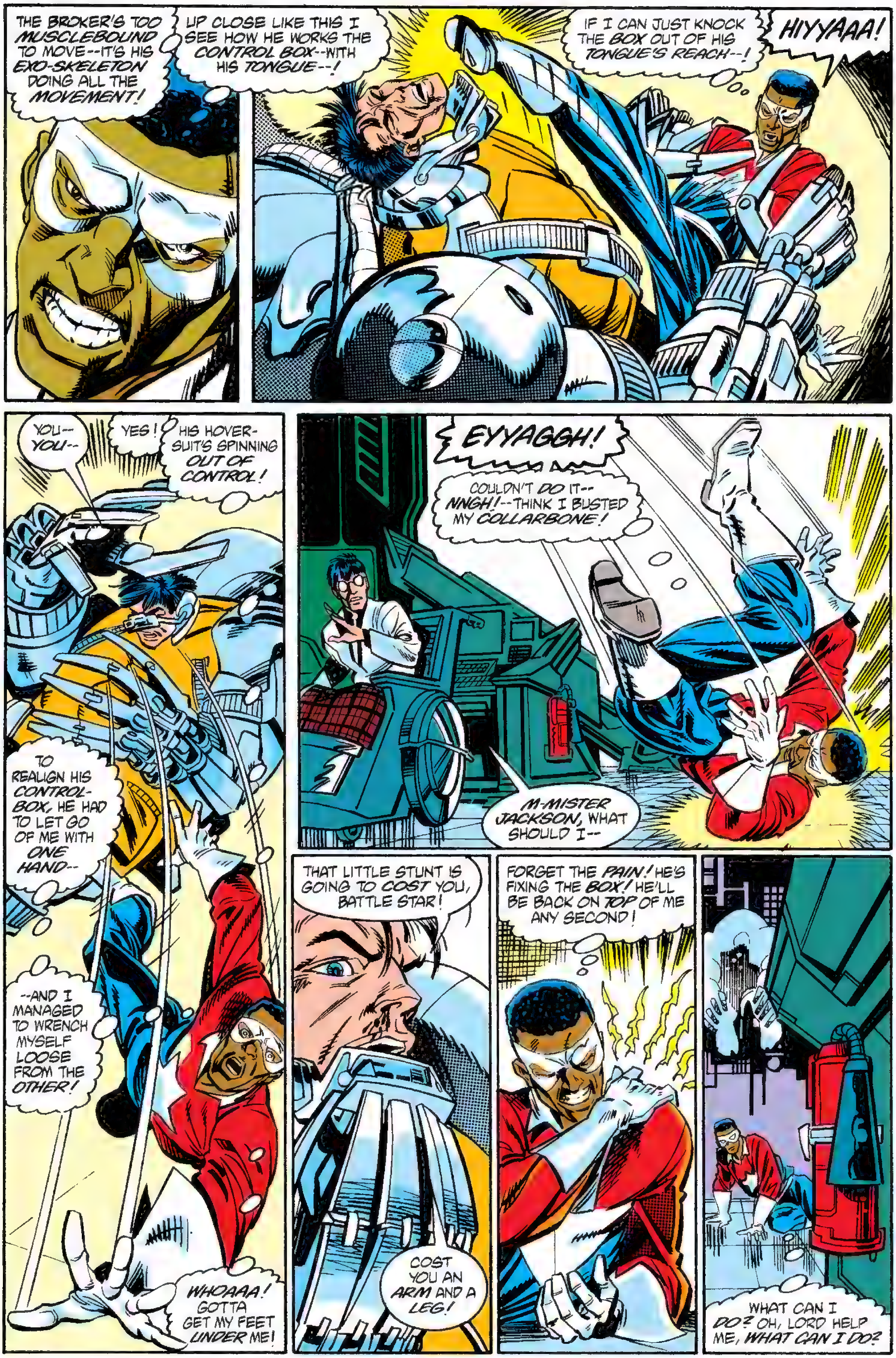

IT LOOKED LIKE BATTLE STAR'S **LAST STAND.** HIS SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE TAKEN AWAY, HE STOOD SURROUNDED BY NO LESS THAN **NINE** SUPER-STRONG HIRELINGS, WITH NOTHING BUT A SINGLE **HOSTAGE** TO BUY HIM TIME...
THEN SUDDENLY THE LABORATORY CEILING **EXPLODED**--AND FROM IT DROPPED BATTLE STAR'S ONE-TIME **PARTNER,** THE UNSTOPPABLE **U.S.AGENT**--!
JOHNNY--! HOW--HOW DID HE FIND ME **HERE?**
LET **GO** OF ME! I WANT TO SEE WHAT'S **HAPPENING!**
WHO THE--?
CAP'N AMERICA--?!?
NAW--IT'S THAT DOPE WHAT **THINKS** HE'S HIM!

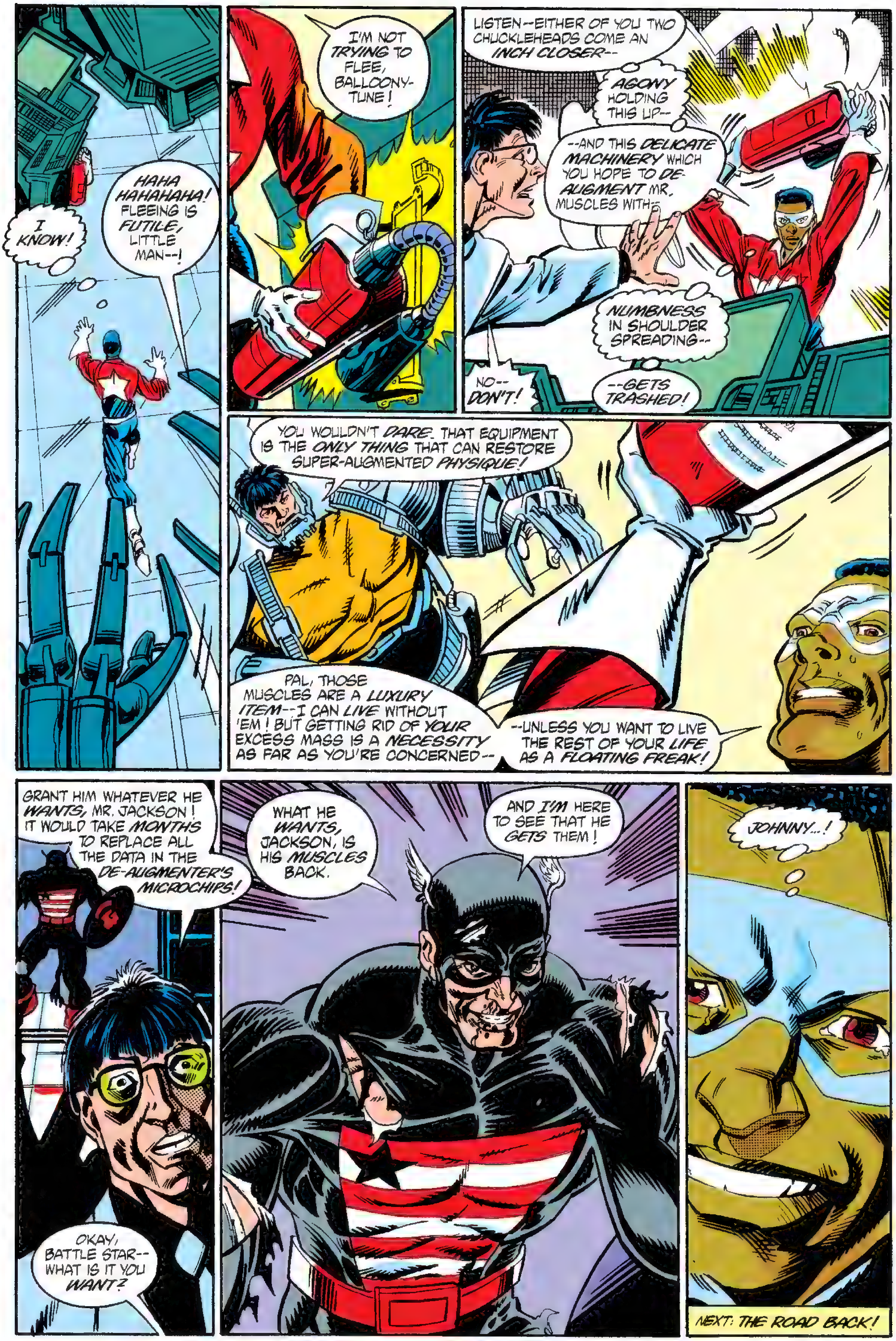
GOING FOR BROKE

BY GRUENWALD - BAGLEY - PANOSIAN - ROBINS - YOMTOV


I HEAR YOU BOYS ARE ALL *STRENGTH-AUGMENTED.* GOOD. IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I COULD GO *ALL-OUT!*
WHALLUGH!
WHOOF!
WOHHHL!
GET HIM! *GET HIM!*
TAKE HIM *DOWN!*
PILE ON!
HE'S JUST *ONE MAN!*
OKAY, MALLY--IT'S JUST *YOU AND ME* AGAIN. NOW TAKE ME TO SEE THE *POWER BROKER*--LET'S *MOVE!*
A-A-ALL *RIGHT*--NOT SO--NOT SO *TIGHT!*
CUTE.
VZZT
GAUUGH!
C'MON, *DRILL*-- REAM HIM!


A FEW CORRIDORS AWAY...
I DON'T SEE HIM, MALLY. IF YOU'RE TRYING TO PULL--
NO, I SWEAR! THIS IS WHERE MR. JACKS--er, THE POWER BROKER WAS SUPPOSED TO MEET ME. HE MUST--
QUIET!
THOUGHT I HEARD--
OH, SPIT--!
LOOKING FOR ME, LITTLE MAN?
GYAAH!
NYAAH-NYAAH, YOU'RE GONNA GET IT!
YOU FOOL! WHAT DID YOU THINK YOU WERE GOING TO DO ONCE YOU FOUND ME? YOU ARE WEAKER THAN A KITTEN! I AM NOT ONLY PHYSICALLY AUGMENTED TO THE POINT OF VIRTUAL INVULNERABILITY--
--I ALSO HAVE A STEEL EXO-SKELETON CAPABLE OF SNAPPING YOUR BONES LIKE DRY KINDLING!
TELL ME, WHAT DID YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH? TELL ME!
GO... NNGH... SPRITZ UP A ROPE!
NOT GOING TO TALK? OKAY THEN, LISTEN INSTEAD--
--TO THE SOUND OF YOUR BONES BREAKING!


THE BROKER'S TOO MUSCLEBOUND TO MOVE--IT'S HIS EXO-SKELETON DOING ALL THE MOVEMENT!
UP CLOSE LIKE THIS I SEE HOW HE WORKS THE CONTROL BOX--WITH HIS TONGUE--!
IF I CAN JUST KNOCK THE BOX OUT OF HIS TONGUE'S REACH--!
HIYYAAA!
YOU-- YOU--
YES!
HIS HOVER-SUIT'S SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL!
TO REALIGN HIS CONTROL-BOX, HE HAD TO LET GO OF ME WITH ONE HAND--
--AND I MANAGED TO WRENCH MYSELF LOOSE FROM THE OTHER!
WHOAAA! GOTTA GET MY FEET UNDER ME!
EYYAGGH!
COULDN'T DO IT-- NNGH!--THINK I BUSTED MY COLLARBONE!
M-MISTER JACKSON, WHAT SHOULD I--
THAT LITTLE STUNT IS GOING TO COST YOU, BATTLE STAR!
COST YOU AN ARM AND A LEG!
FORGET THE PAIN! HE'S FIXING THE BOX! HE'LL BE BACK ON TOP OF ME ANY SECOND!
WHAT CAN I DO? OH, LORD HELP ME, WHAT CAN I DO?


HAHA HAHAHAHA! FLEEING IS FUTILE, LITTLE MAN--!
I KNOW!
I'M NOT TRYING TO FLEE, BALLOONY-TUNE!
LISTEN--EITHER OF YOU TWO CHUCKLEHEADS COME AN INCH CLOSER--
AGONY HOLDING THIS UP--
--AND THIS DELICATE MACHINERY WHICH YOU HOPE TO DE-AUGMENT MR. MUSCLES WITH--
NUMBNESS IN SHOULDER SPREADING--
NO-- DON'T!
--GETS TRASHED!
YOU WOULDN'T DARE. THAT EQUIPMENT IS THE ONLY THING THAT CAN RESTORE SUPER-AUGMENTED PHYSIQUE!
PAL, THOSE MUSCLES ARE A LUXURY ITEM--I CAN LIVE WITHOUT 'EM! BUT GETTING RID OF YOUR EXCESS MASS IS A NECESSITY AS FAR AS YOU'RE CONCERNED--
--UNLESS YOU WANT TO LIVE THE REST OF YOUR LIFE AS A FLOATING FREAK!
GRANT HIM WHATEVER HE WANTS, MR. JACKSON! IT WOULD TAKE MONTHS TO REPLACE ALL THE DATA IN THE DE-AUGMENTER'S MICROCHIPS!
OKAY, BATTLE STAR-- WHAT IS IT YOU WANT?
WHAT HE WANTS, JACKSON, IS HIS MUSCLES BACK.
AND I'M HERE TO SEE THAT HE GETS THEM!
JOHNNY...!
NEXT: THE ROAD BACK!

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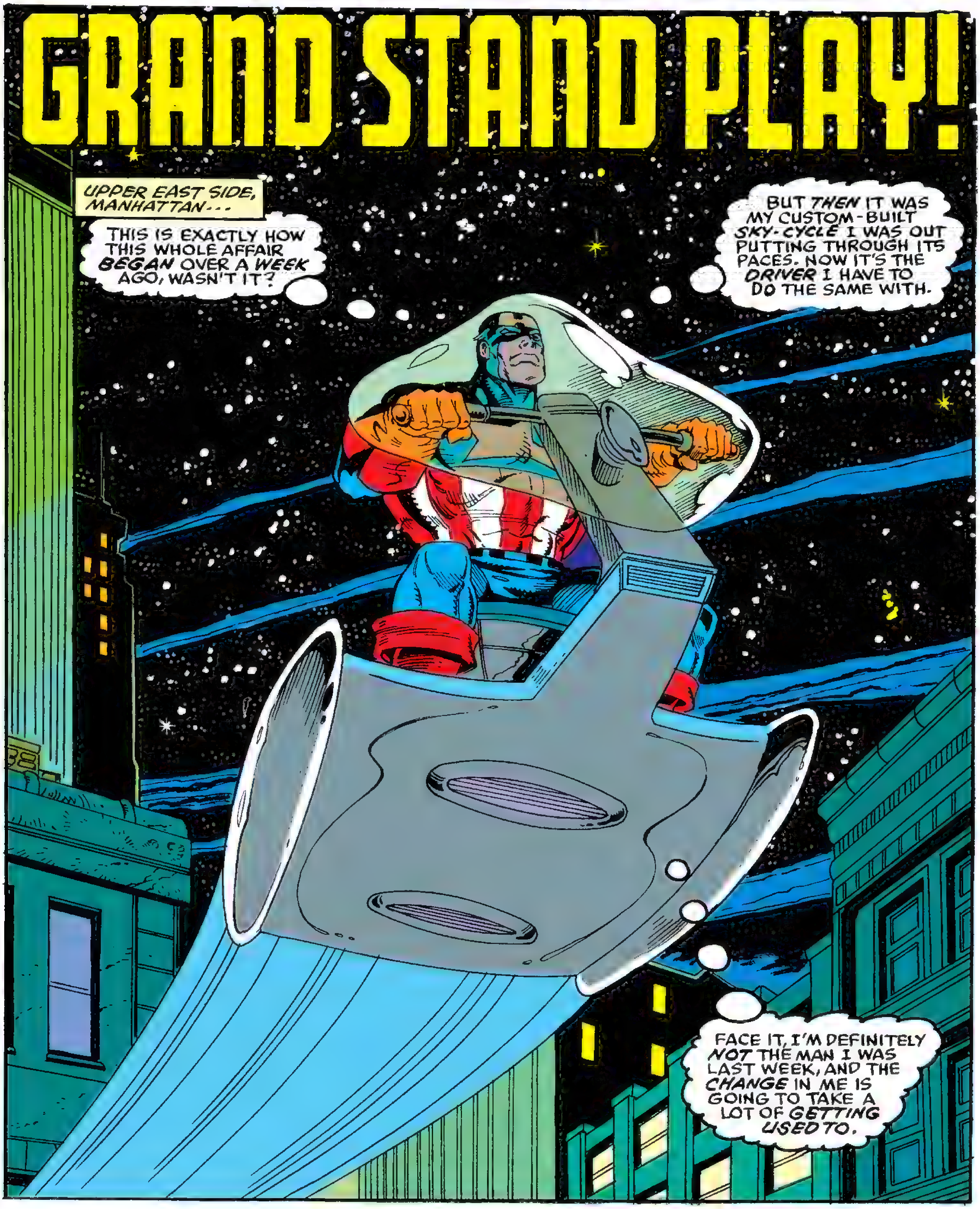
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
STRIPPED OF THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM -- CAP FIGHTS FOR HIS LIFE AGAINST CROSSBONES™!
RON LIM '90 + Dan Bulanadi

***STEVE ROGERS** . . . BORN IN THE U.S.A., RAISED TO CHERISH THE IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY, ENDOWED WITH A SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE, AND DRIVEN TO BE THE MOST CAPABLE COMBATANT IN THE WORLD. NOW AS BOTH LONE CRUSADER AND LEADER OF THE RENOWNED AVENGERS, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM! STAN LEE PRESENTS . . . CAPTAIN AMERICA!*

GRAND STAND PLAY!


UPPER EAST SIDE, MANHATTAN...
THIS IS EXACTLY HOW THIS WHOLE AFFAIR *BEGAN* OVER A *WEEK* AGO, WASN'T IT?
BUT *THEN* IT WAS MY CUSTOM-BUILT *SKY-CYCLE* I WAS OUT PUTTING THROUGH ITS PACES. NOW IT'S THE *DRIVER* I HAVE TO DO THE SAME WITH.
FACE IT, I'M DEFINITELY *NOT* THE MAN I WAS LAST WEEK, AND THE *CHANGE* IN ME IS GOING TO TAKE A LOT OF *GETTING USED TO.*

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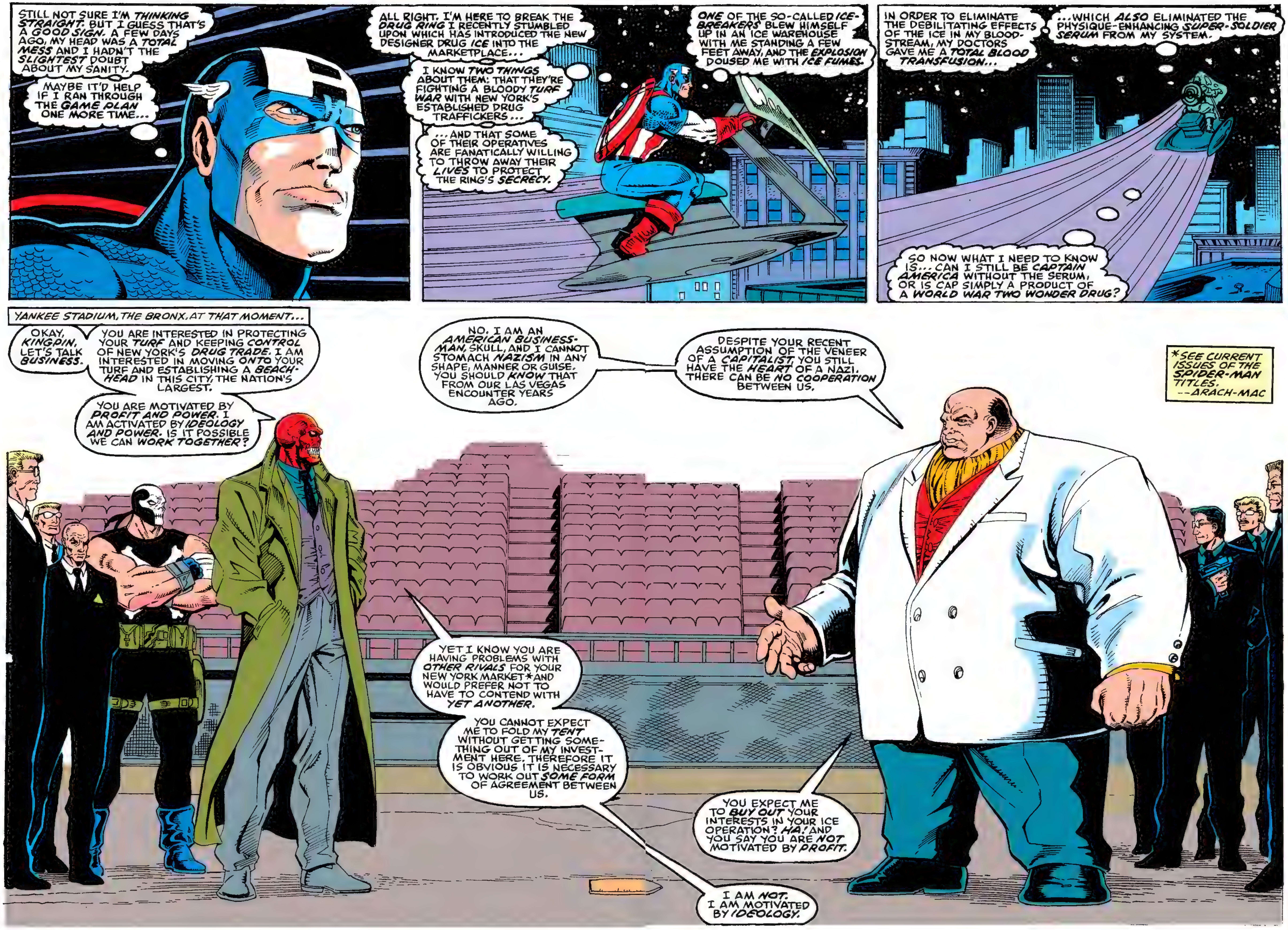
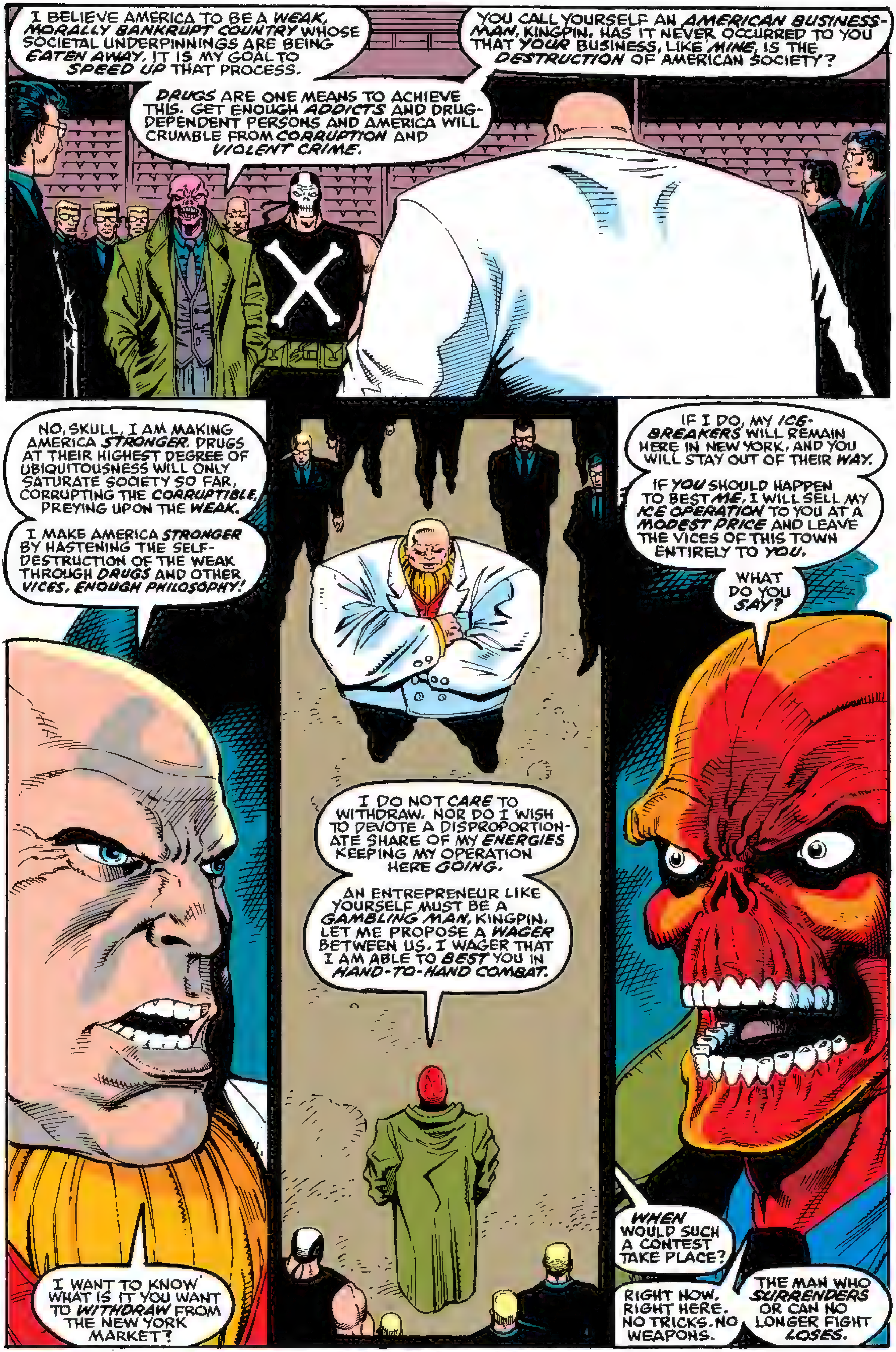
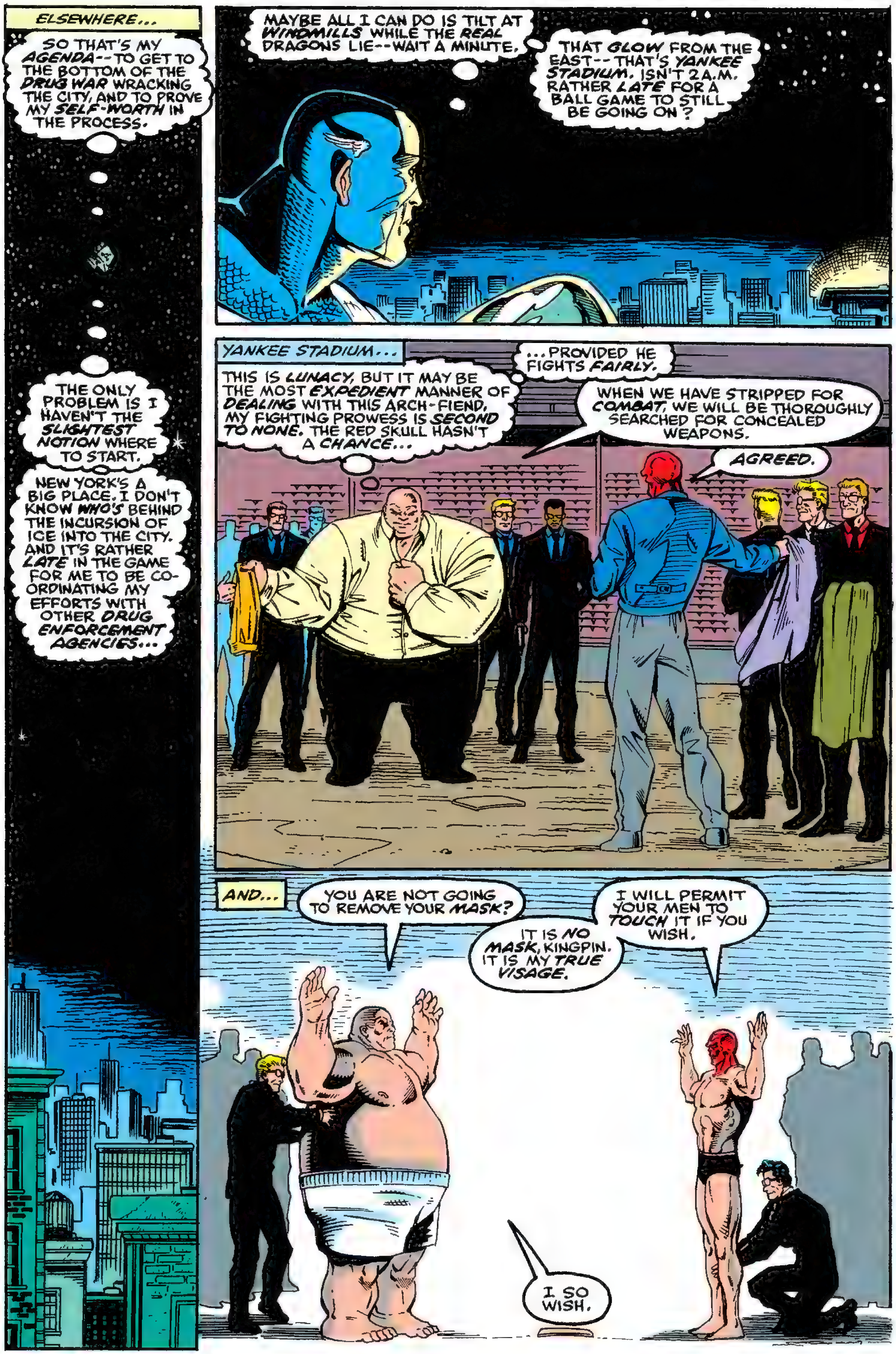
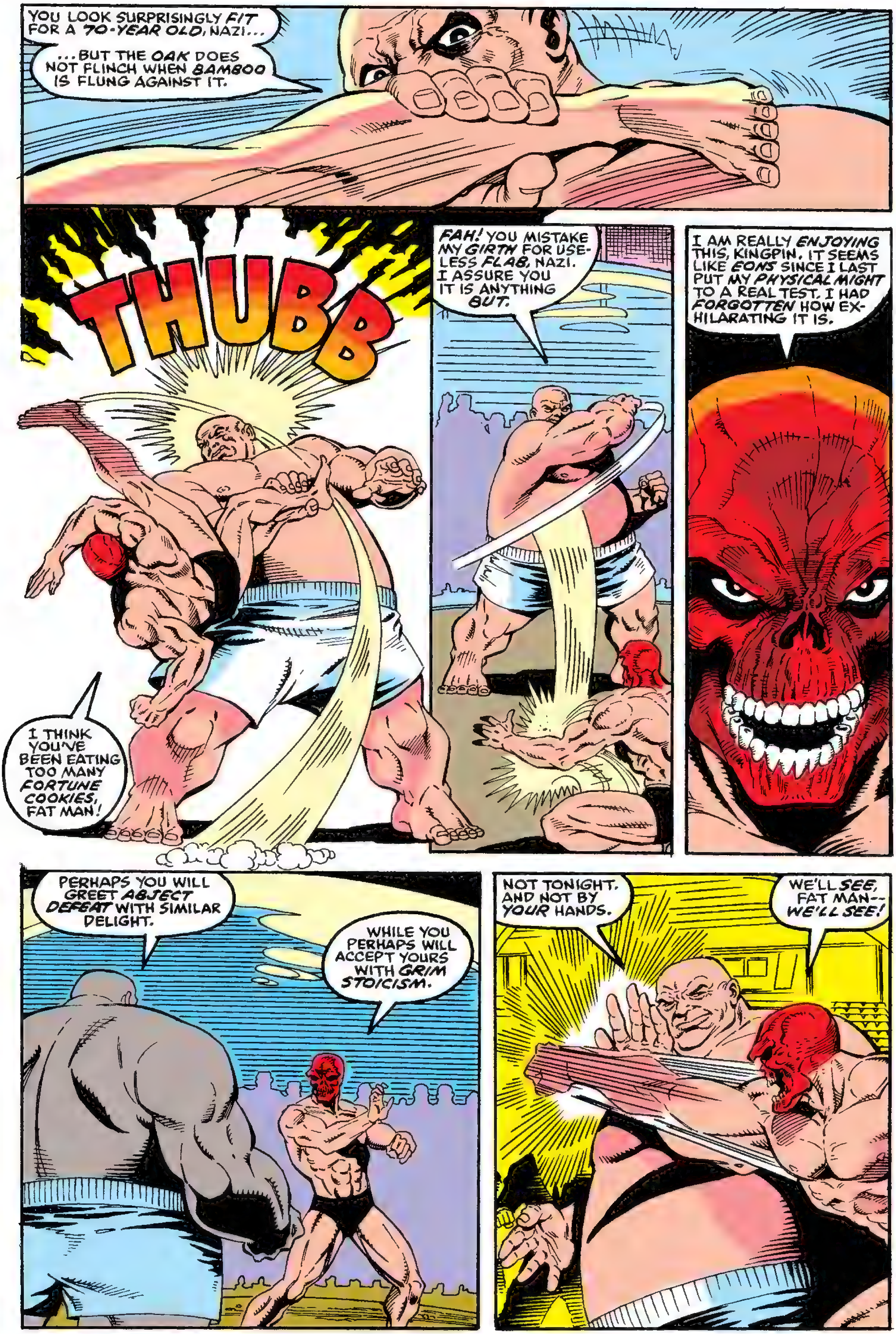
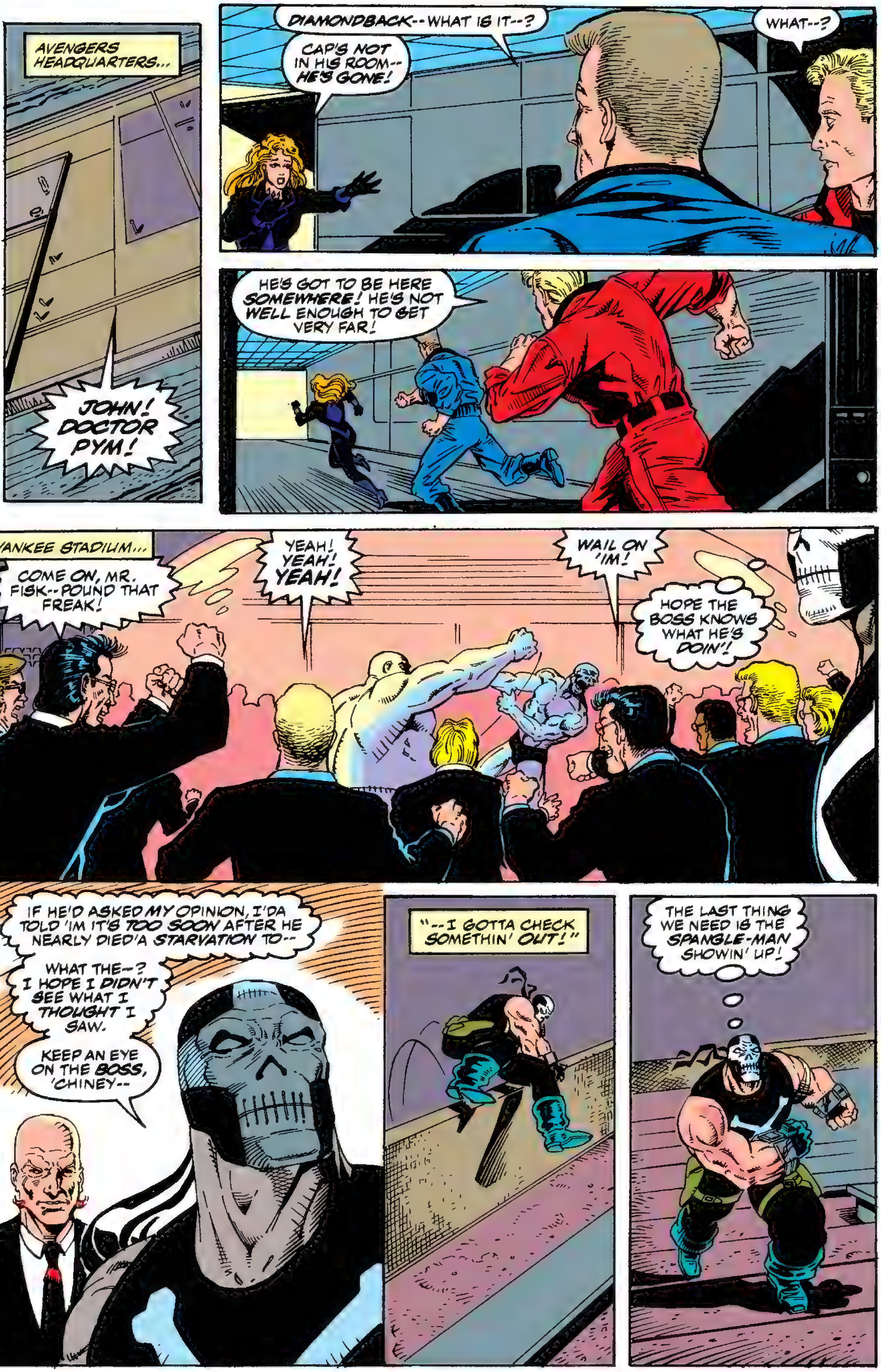

STILL NOT SURE I'M THINKING STRAIGHT. BUT I GUESS THAT'S A GOOD SIGN. A FEW DAYS AGO, MY HEAD WAS A TOTAL MESS AND I HADN'T THE SLIGHTEST DOUBT ABOUT MY SANITY.
MAYBE IT'D HELP IF I RAN THROUGH THE GAME PLAN ONE MORE TIME...
ALL RIGHT. I'M HERE TO BREAK THE DRUG RING I RECENTLY STUMBLED UPON WHICH HAS INTRODUCED THE NEW DESIGNER DRUG ICE INTO THE MARKETPLACE...
I KNOW TWO THINGS ABOUT THEM: THAT THEY'RE FIGHTING A BLOODY TURF WAR WITH NEW YORK'S ESTABLISHED DRUG TRAFFICKERS...
...AND THAT SOME OF THEIR OPERATIVES ARE FANATICALLY WILLING TO THROW AWAY THEIR LIVES TO PROTECT THE RING'S SECRECY.
ONE OF THE SO-CALLED ICE-BREAKERS BLEW HIMSELF UP IN AN ICE WAREHOUSE WITH ME STANDING A FEW FEET AWAY, AND THE EXPLOSION DOUSED ME WITH ICE FUMES.
IN ORDER TO ELIMINATE THE DEBILITATING EFFECTS OF THE ICE IN MY BLOOD-STREAM, MY DOCTORS GAVE ME A TOTAL BLOOD TRANSFUSION...
...WHICH ALSO ELIMINATED THE PHYSIQUE-ENHANCING SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM FROM MY SYSTEM.
SO NOW WHAT I NEED TO KNOW IS... CAN I STILL BE CAPTAIN AMERICA WITHOUT THE SERUM, OR IS CAP SIMPLY A PRODUCT OF A WORLD WAR TWO WONDER DRUG?
YANKEE STADIUM, THE BRONX, AT THAT MOMENT...
OKAY, KINGPIN, LET'S TALK BUSINESS.
YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PROTECTING YOUR TURF AND KEEPING CONTROL OF NEW YORK'S DRUG TRADE. I AM INTERESTED IN MOVING ONTO YOUR TURF AND ESTABLISHING A BEACH-HEAD IN THIS CITY, THE NATION'S LARGEST.
YOU ARE MOTIVATED BY PROFIT AND POWER. I AM ACTIVATED BY IDEOLOGY AND POWER. IS IT POSSIBLE WE CAN WORK TOGETHER?
NO. I AM AN AMERICAN BUSINESS-MAN, SKULL, AND I CANNOT STOMACH NAZISM IN ANY SHAPE, MANNER OR GUISE. YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT FROM OUR LAS VEGAS ENCOUNTER YEARS AGO.
DESPITE YOUR RECENT ASSUMPTION OF THE VENEER OF A CAPITALIST, YOU STILL HAVE THE HEART OF A NAZI. THERE CAN BE NO COOPERATION BETWEEN US.
*SEE CURRENT ISSUES OF THE SPIDER-MAN TITLES. --ARACH-MAC
YET I KNOW YOU ARE HAVING PROBLEMS WITH OTHER RIVALS FOR YOUR NEW YORK MARKET* AND WOULD PREFER NOT TO HAVE TO CONTEND WITH YET ANOTHER.
YOU CANNOT EXPECT ME TO FOLD MY TENT WITHOUT GETTING SOME-THING OUT OF MY INVEST-MENT HERE. THEREFORE IT IS OBVIOUS IT IS NECESSARY TO WORK OUT SOME FORM OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN US.
YOU EXPECT ME TO BUY OUT YOUR INTERESTS IN YOUR ICE OPERATION? HA! AND YOU SAY YOU ARE NOT MOTIVATED BY PROFIT.
I AM NOT. I AM MOTIVATED BY IDEOLOGY.

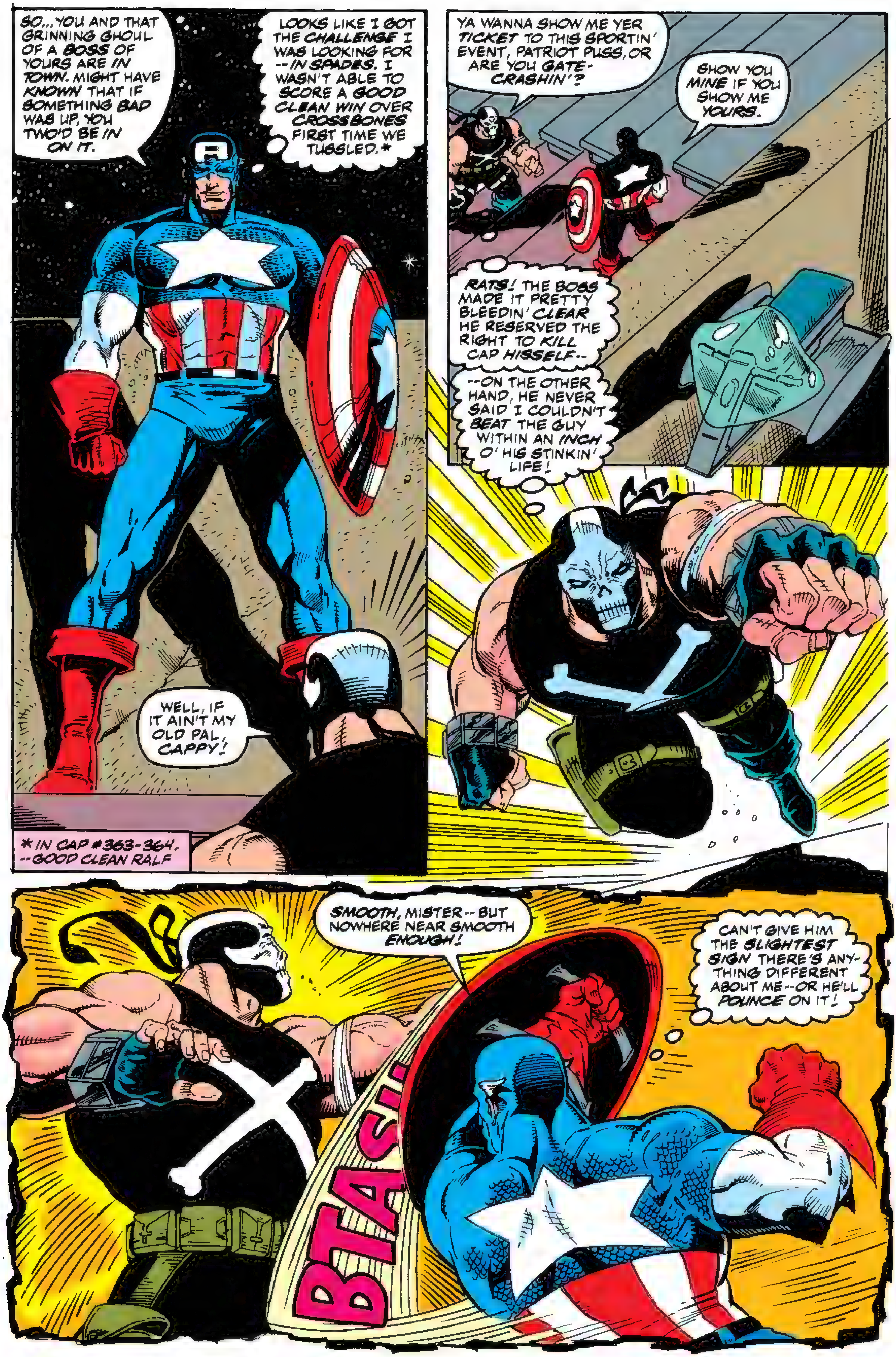

I BELIEVE AMERICA TO BE A WEAK, MORALLY BANKRUPT COUNTRY WHOSE SOCIETAL UNDERPINNINGS ARE BEING EATEN AWAY. IT IS MY GOAL TO SPEED UP THAT PROCESS.
DRUGS ARE ONE MEANS TO ACHIEVE THIS. GET ENOUGH ADDICTS AND DRUG-DEPENDENT PERSONS AND AMERICA WILL CRUMBLE FROM CORRUPTION AND VIOLENT CRIME.
YOU CALL YOURSELF AN AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN, KINGPIN. HAS IT NEVER OCCURRED TO YOU THAT YOUR BUSINESS, LIKE MINE, IS THE DESTRUCTION OF AMERICAN SOCIETY?
NO, SKULL, I AM MAKING AMERICA STRONGER. DRUGS AT THEIR HIGHEST DEGREE OF UBIQUITOUSNESS WILL ONLY SATURATE SOCIETY SO FAR, CORRUPTING THE CORRUPTIBLE, PREYING UPON THE WEAK.
I MAKE AMERICA STRONGER BY HASTENING THE SELF-DESTRUCTION OF THE WEAK THROUGH DRUGS AND OTHER VICES. ENOUGH PHILOSOPHY!
I WANT TO KNOW WHAT IS IT YOU WANT TO WITHDRAW FROM THE NEW YORK MARKET?
I DO NOT CARE TO WITHDRAW. NOR DO I WISH TO DEVOTE A DISPROPORTIONATE SHARE OF MY ENERGIES KEEPING MY OPERATION HERE GOING.
AN ENTREPRENEUR LIKE YOURSELF MUST BE A GAMBLING MAN, KINGPIN. LET ME PROPOSE A WAGER BETWEEN US. I WAGER THAT I AM ABLE TO BEST YOU IN HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT.
IF I DO, MY ICE-BREAKERS WILL REMAIN HERE IN NEW YORK, AND YOU WILL STAY OUT OF THEIR WAY.
IF YOU SHOULD HAPPEN TO BEST ME, I WILL SELL MY ICE OPERATION TO YOU AT A MODEST PRICE AND LEAVE THE VICES OF THIS TOWN ENTIRELY TO YOU.
WHAT DO YOU SAY?
WHEN WOULD SUCH A CONTEST TAKE PLACE?
RIGHT NOW. RIGHT HERE. NO TRICKS. NO WEAPONS.
THE MAN WHO SURRENDERS OR CAN NO LONGER FIGHT LOSES.

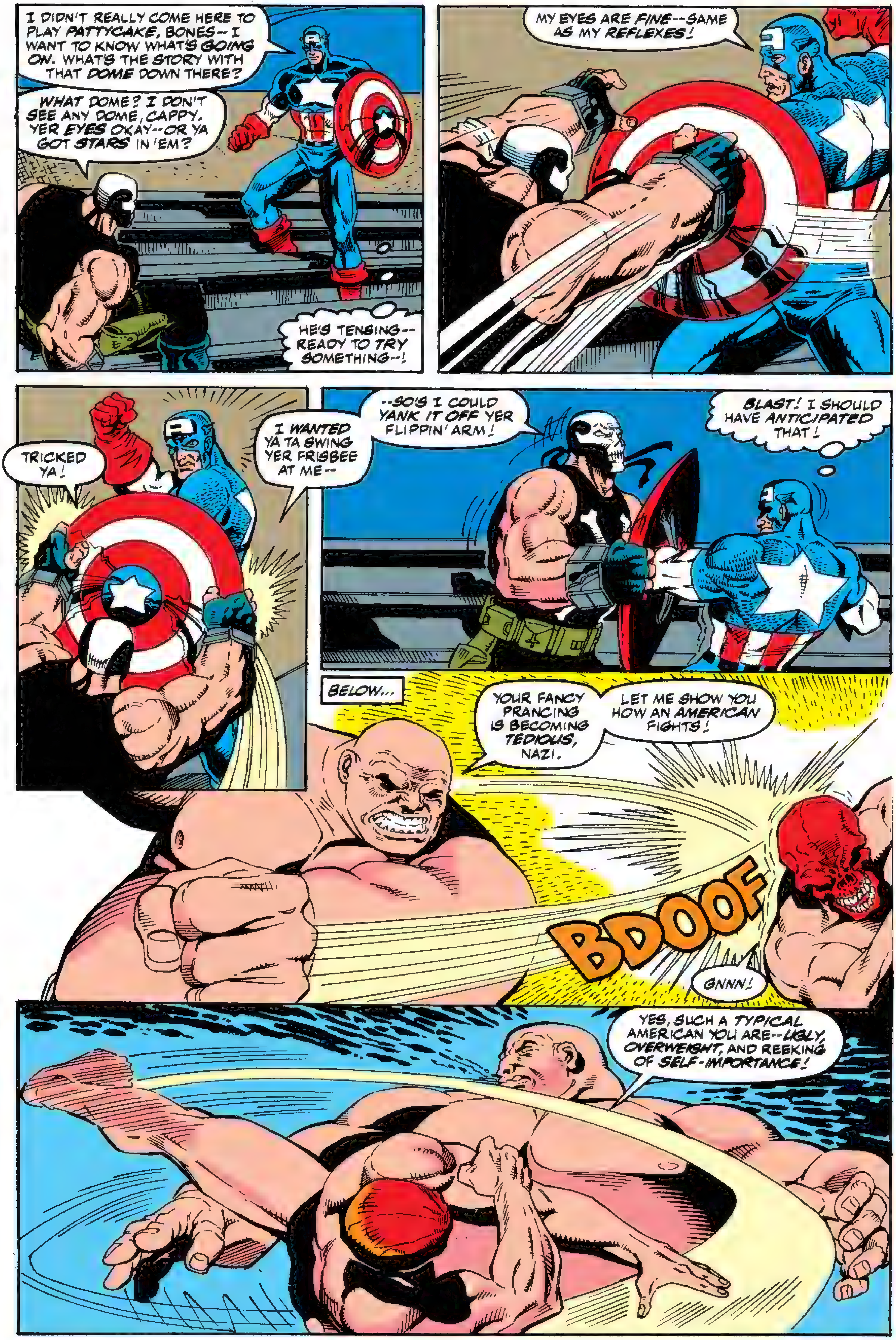

ELSEWHERE...
SO THAT'S MY AGENDA--TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THE DRUG WAR WRACKING THE CITY, AND TO PROVE MY SELF-WORTH IN THE PROCESS.
THE ONLY PROBLEM IS I HAVEN'T THE SLIGHTEST NOTION WHERE TO START.
NEW YORK'S A BIG PLACE. I DON'T KNOW WHO'S BEHIND THE INCURSION OF ICE INTO THE CITY. AND IT'S RATHER LATE IN THE GAME FOR ME TO BE CO-ORDINATING MY EFFORTS WITH OTHER DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES...
MAYBE ALL I CAN DO IS TILT AT WINDMILLS WHILE THE REAL DRAGONS LIE--WAIT A MINUTE.
THAT GLOW FROM THE EAST--THAT'S YANKEE STADIUM. ISN'T 2 A.M. RATHER LATE FOR A BALL GAME TO STILL BE GOING ON?
YANKEE STADIUM...
THIS IS LUNACY, BUT IT MAY BE THE MOST EXPEDIENT MANNER OF DEALING WITH THIS ARCH-FIEND. MY FIGHTING PROWESS IS SECOND TO NONE. THE RED SKULL HASN'T A CHANCE...
...PROVIDED HE FIGHTS FAIRLY.
WHEN WE HAVE STRIPPED FOR COMBAT, WE WILL BE THOROUGHLY SEARCHED FOR CONCEALED WEAPONS.
AGREED.
AND...
YOU ARE NOT GOING TO REMOVE YOUR MASK?
IT IS NO MASK, KINGPIN. IT IS MY TRUE VISAGE.
I WILL PERMIT YOUR MEN TO TOUCH IT IF YOU WISH.
I SO WISH.

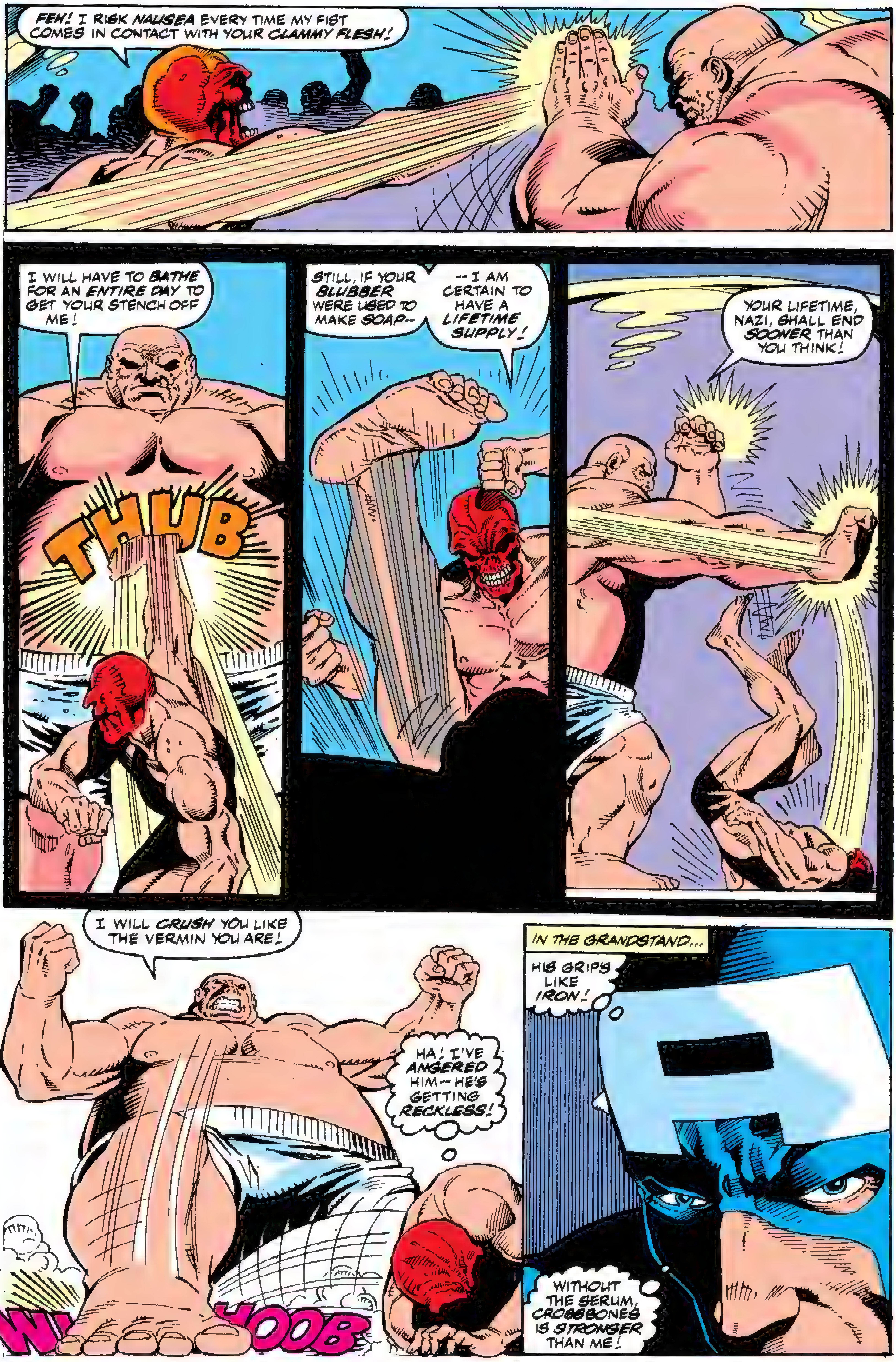
YOU ARE SATISFIED I CONCEAL NO WEAPONS?
YES.
I AM SATISFIED AS WELL.
GENTLEMEN, PLEASE BACK UP. A DUEL WITH A FELLOW OF THE KINGPIN'S... STATURE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY REQUIRE SOMEWHAT MORE SPACE.
OKAY, KINGPIN, SHALL WE BEGIN?
YES.
VWOOM
EH--? WHAT IS--?
JUST A LITTLE INSURANCE OUR CONTEST WILL NOT BE DISTURBED.
I'D ADVISE YOU TO TRAIN YOUR MEN TO BE MORE THOROUGH.
WOULD YOU CARE TO SEE?
THEY OVERLOOKED THE ACTIVATOR TO THIS IMPENETRABLE PLASTIDOME ATTACHED TO MY HEEL.

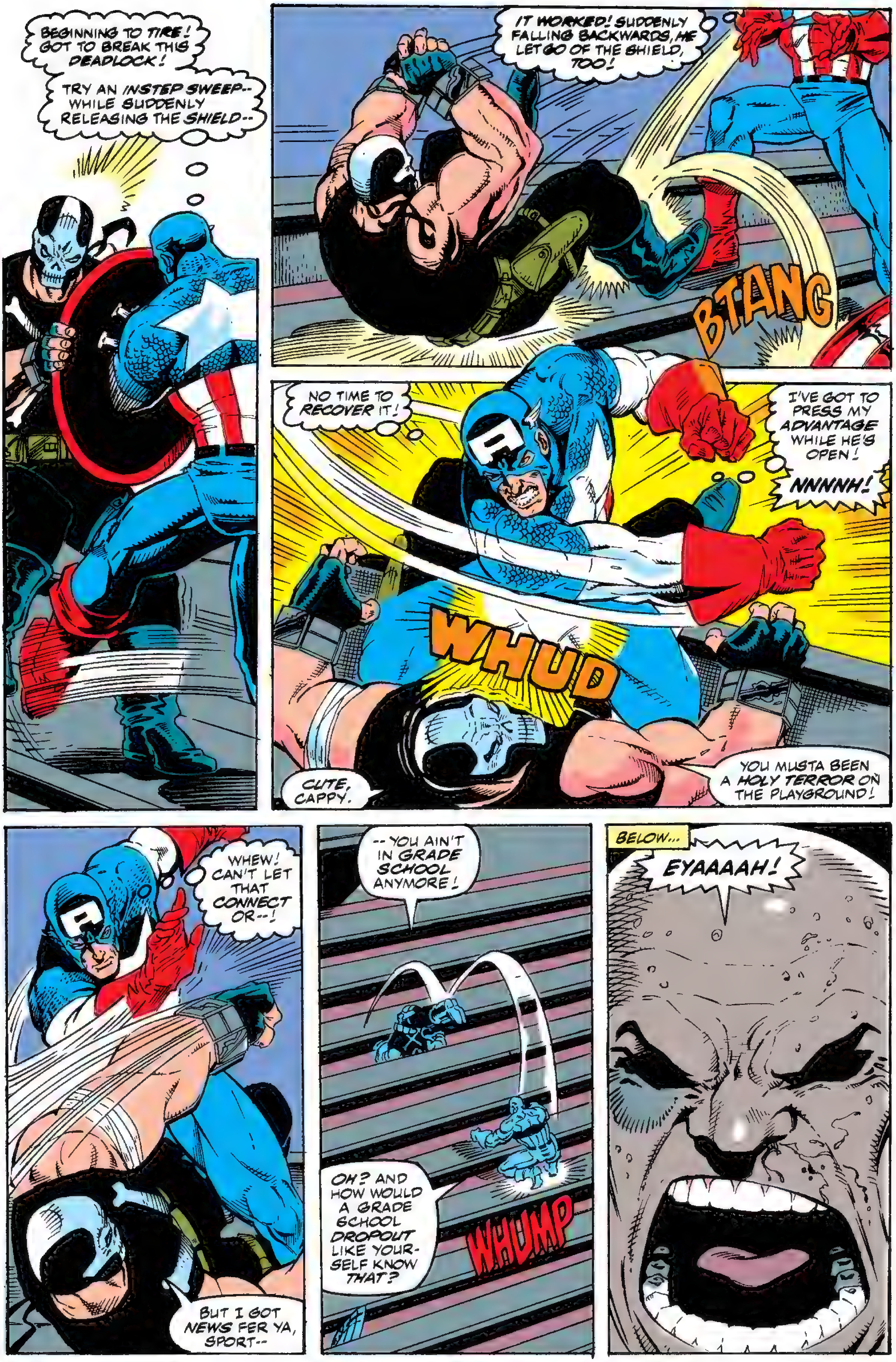

YOU LOOK SURPRISINGLY *FIT* FOR A *70-YEAR OLD*, NAZI...
...BUT THE *OAK* DOES NOT FLINCH WHEN *BAMBOO* IS FLUNG AGAINST IT.
THUBB
I THINK YOU'VE BEEN EATING TOO MANY *FORTUNE COOKIES*, FAT MAN!
FAH! YOU MISTAKE MY *GIRTH* FOR USELESS *FLAB*, NAZI. I ASSURE YOU IT IS ANYTHING *BUT*.
I AM REALLY *ENJOYING* THIS, KINGPIN. IT SEEMS LIKE *EONS* SINCE I LAST PUT MY *PHYSICAL MIGHT* TO A REAL TEST. I HAD *FORGOTTEN* HOW EXHILARATING IT IS.
PERHAPS YOU WILL GREET *ABJECT DEFEAT* WITH SIMILAR DELIGHT.
WHILE YOU PERHAPS WILL ACCEPT YOURS WITH *GRIM STOICISM*.
NOT TONIGHT. AND NOT BY *YOUR* HANDS.
WE'LL *SEE*, FAT MAN-- *WE'LL SEE!*

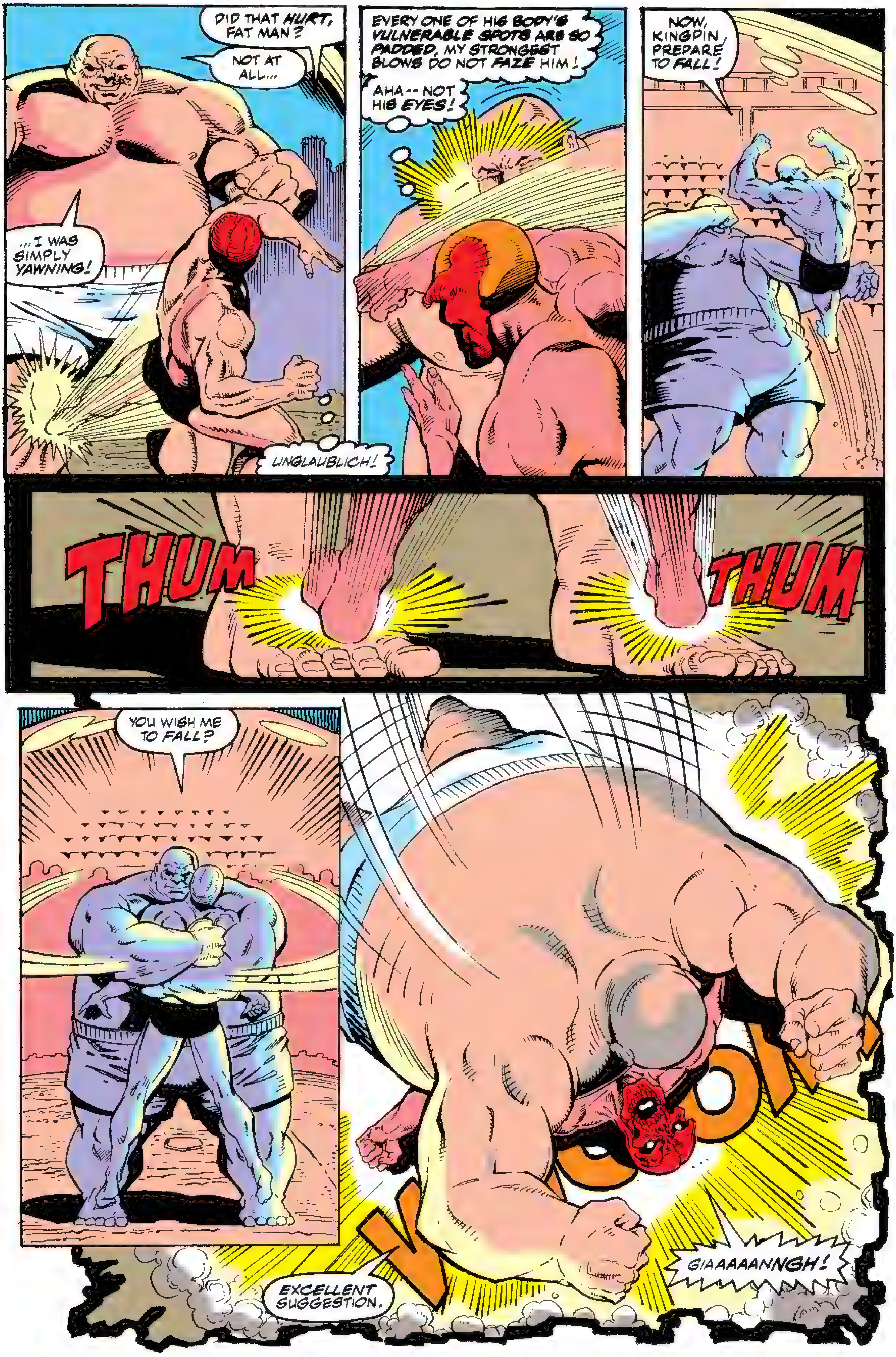

AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS...
JOHN! DOCTOR PYM!
DIAMONDBACK--WHAT IS IT--?
CAP'S NOT IN HIS ROOM--HE'S GONE!
WHAT--?
HE'S GOT TO BE HERE SOMEWHERE! HE'S NOT WELL ENOUGH TO GET VERY FAR!
YANKEE STADIUM...
COME ON, MR. FISK--POUND THAT FREAK!
YEAH! YEAH! YEAH!
WAIL ON 'IM!
HOPE THE BOSS KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOIN'!
IF HE'D ASKED MY OPINION, I'DA TOLD 'IM IT'S TOO SOON AFTER HE NEARLY DIED'A STARVATION TO--
WHAT THE--? I HOPE I DIDN'T SEE WHAT I THOUGHT I SAW.
KEEP AN EYE ON THE BOSS, 'CHINEY--
"--I GOTTA CHECK SOMETHIN' OUT!"
THE LAST THING WE NEED IS THE SPANGLE-MAN SHOWIN' UP!

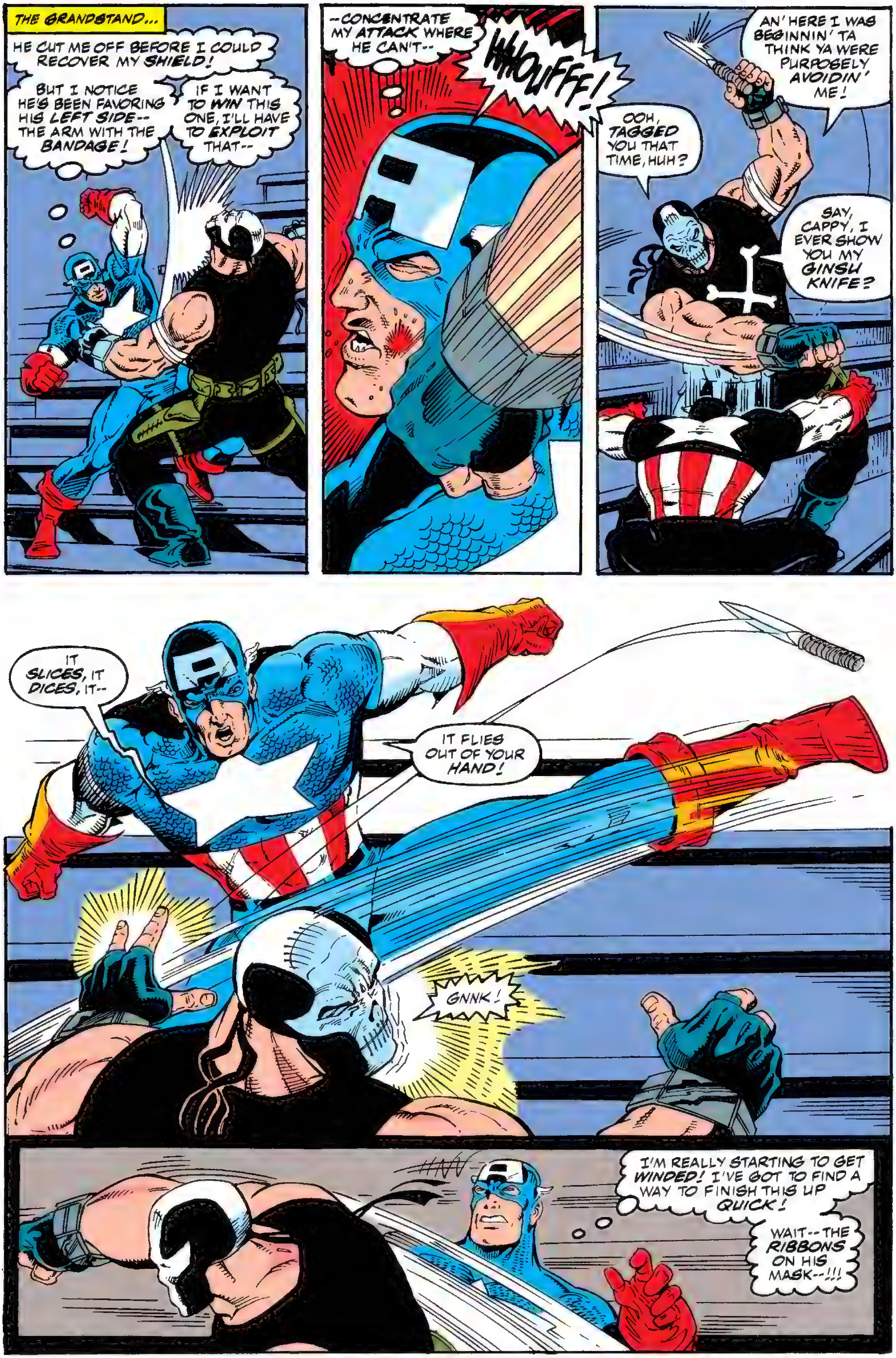

SO... YOU AND THAT GRINNING GHOUL OF A BOSS OF YOURS ARE IN TOWN. MIGHT HAVE KNOWN THAT IF SOMETHING BAD WAS UP, YOU TWO'D BE IN ON IT.
LOOKS LIKE I GOT THE CHALLENGE I WAS LOOKING FOR -- IN SPADES. I WASN'T ABLE TO SCORE A GOOD CLEAN WIN OVER CROSSBONES FIRST TIME WE TUSSLED.*
WELL, IF IT AIN'T MY OLD PAL, CAPPY!
* IN CAP #363-364. --GOOD CLEAN RALF
YA WANNA SHOW ME YER TICKET TO THIS SPORTIN' EVENT, PATRIOT PUSS, OR ARE YOU GATE-CRASHIN'?
SHOW YOU MINE IF YOU SHOW ME YOURS.
RATS! THE BOSS MADE IT PRETTY BLEEDIN' CLEAR HE RESERVED THE RIGHT TO KILL CAP HISSELF--
--ON THE OTHER HAND, HE NEVER SAID I COULDN'T BEAT THE GUY WITHIN AN INCH O' HIS STINKIN' LIFE!
SMOOTH, MISTER -- BUT NOWHERE NEAR SMOOTH ENOUGH!
CAN'T GIVE HIM THE SLIGHTEST SIGN THERE'S ANY-THING DIFFERENT ABOUT ME -- OR HE'LL POUNCE ON IT!
BTASH


I DIDN'T REALLY COME HERE TO PLAY PATTYCAKE, BONES-- I WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON. WHAT'S THE STORY WITH THAT DOME DOWN THERE?
WHAT DOME? I DON'T SEE ANY DOME, CAPPY. YER EYES OKAY--OR YA GOT STARS IN 'EM?
HE'S TENSING-- READY TO TRY SOMETHING--!
MY EYES ARE FINE--SAME AS MY REFLEXES!
TRICKED YA!
I WANTED YA TA SWING YER FRISBEE AT ME--
--SO'S I COULD YANK IT OFF YER FLIPPIN' ARM!
BLAST! I SHOULD HAVE ANTICIPATED THAT!
BELOW...
YOUR FANCY PRANCING IS BECOMING TEDIOUS, NAZI.
LET ME SHOW YOU HOW AN AMERICAN FIGHTS!
BDOOF
GNNN!
YES, SUCH A TYPICAL AMERICAN YOU ARE--UGLY, OVERWEIGHT, AND REEKING OF SELF-IMPORTANCE!

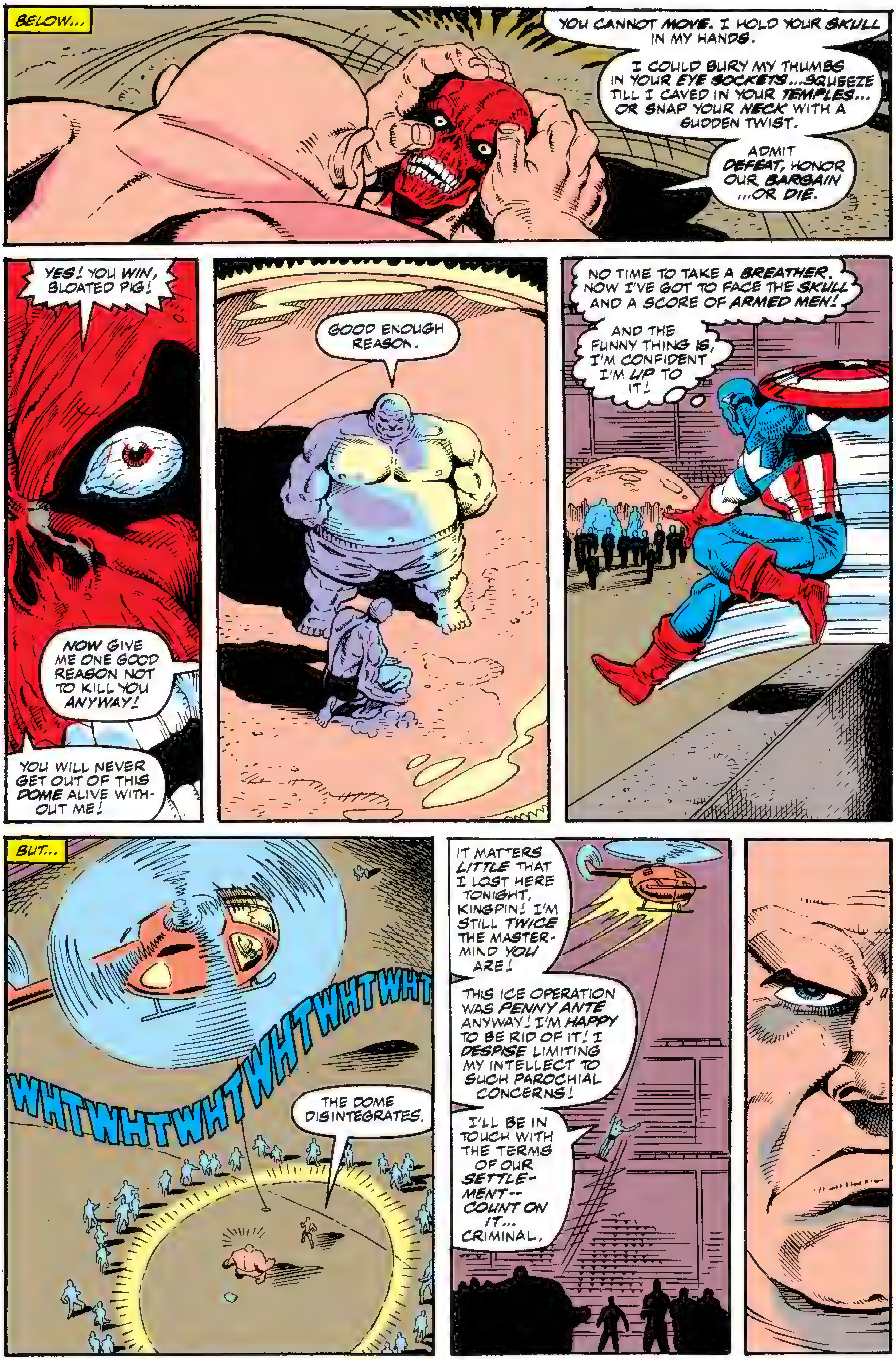

FEH! I RISK NAUSEA EVERY TIME MY FIST COMES IN CONTACT WITH YOUR CLAMMY FLESH!
I WILL HAVE TO BATHE FOR AN ENTIRE DAY TO GET YOUR STENCH OFF ME!
THUB
STILL, IF YOUR BLUBBER WERE USED TO MAKE SOAP--
-- I AM CERTAIN TO HAVE A LIFETIME SUPPLY!
YOUR LIFETIME, NAZI, SHALL END SOONER THAN YOU THINK!
I WILL CRUSH YOU LIKE THE VERMIN YOU ARE!
HA! I'VE ANGERED HIM-- HE'S GETTING RECKLESS!
W OOB
IN THE GRANDSTAND...
HIS GRIP'S LIKE IRON!
WITHOUT THE SERUM, CROSSBONES IS STRONGER THAN ME!

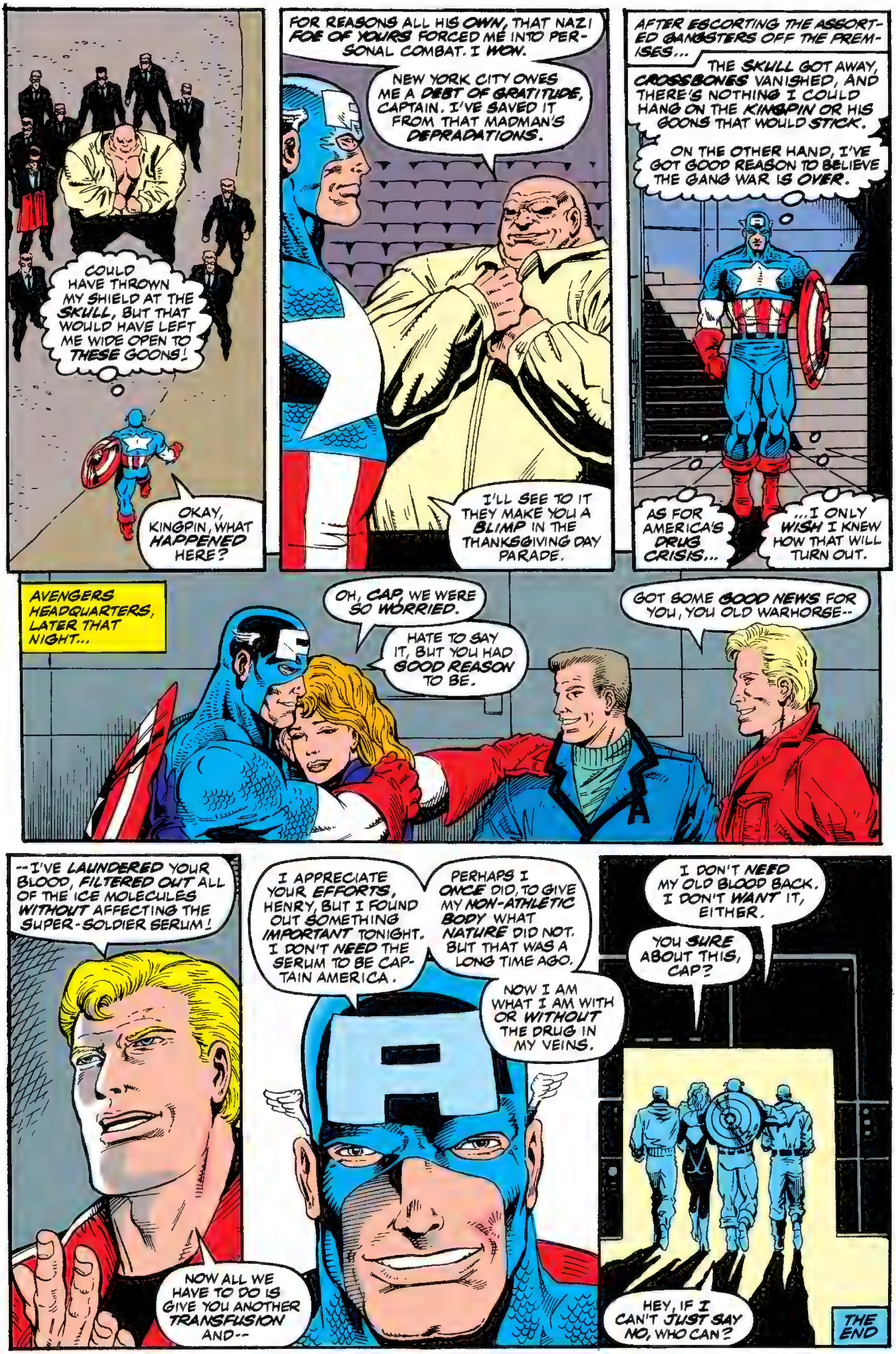

BEGINNING TO TIRE! GOT TO BREAK THIS DEADLOCK!
TRY AN INSTEP SWEEP-- WHILE SUDDENLY RELEASING THE SHIELD--
IT WORKED! SUDDENLY FALLING BACKWARDS, HE LET GO OF THE SHIELD, TOO!
BTANG
NO TIME TO RECOVER IT!
I'VE GOT TO PRESS MY ADVANTAGE WHILE HE'S OPEN!
NNNNH!
WHUD
CUTE, CAPPY.
YOU MUSTA BEEN A HOLY TERROR ON THE PLAYGROUND!
WHEW! CAN'T LET THAT CONNECT OR--!
BUT I GOT NEWS FER YA, SPORT--
--YOU AIN'T IN GRADE SCHOOL ANYMORE!
OH? AND HOW WOULD A GRADE SCHOOL DROPOUT LIKE YOURSELF KNOW THAT?
WHUMP
BELOW...
EYAAAAH!


DID THAT *HURT*, FAT MAN?
NOT AT ALL...
...I WAS SIMPLY *YAWNING!*
UNGLAUBLICH!
EVERY ONE OF HIS BODY'S *VULNERABLE SPOTS* ARE SO *PADDED*, MY STRONGEST BLOWS DO NOT *FAZE* HIM!
AHA -- NOT HIS *EYES!*
NOW, KINGPIN, PREPARE TO *FALL!*
THUM
THUM
YOU WISH ME TO *FALL?*
VOOM
GIAAAAANNGH!
EXCELLENT SUGGESTION.

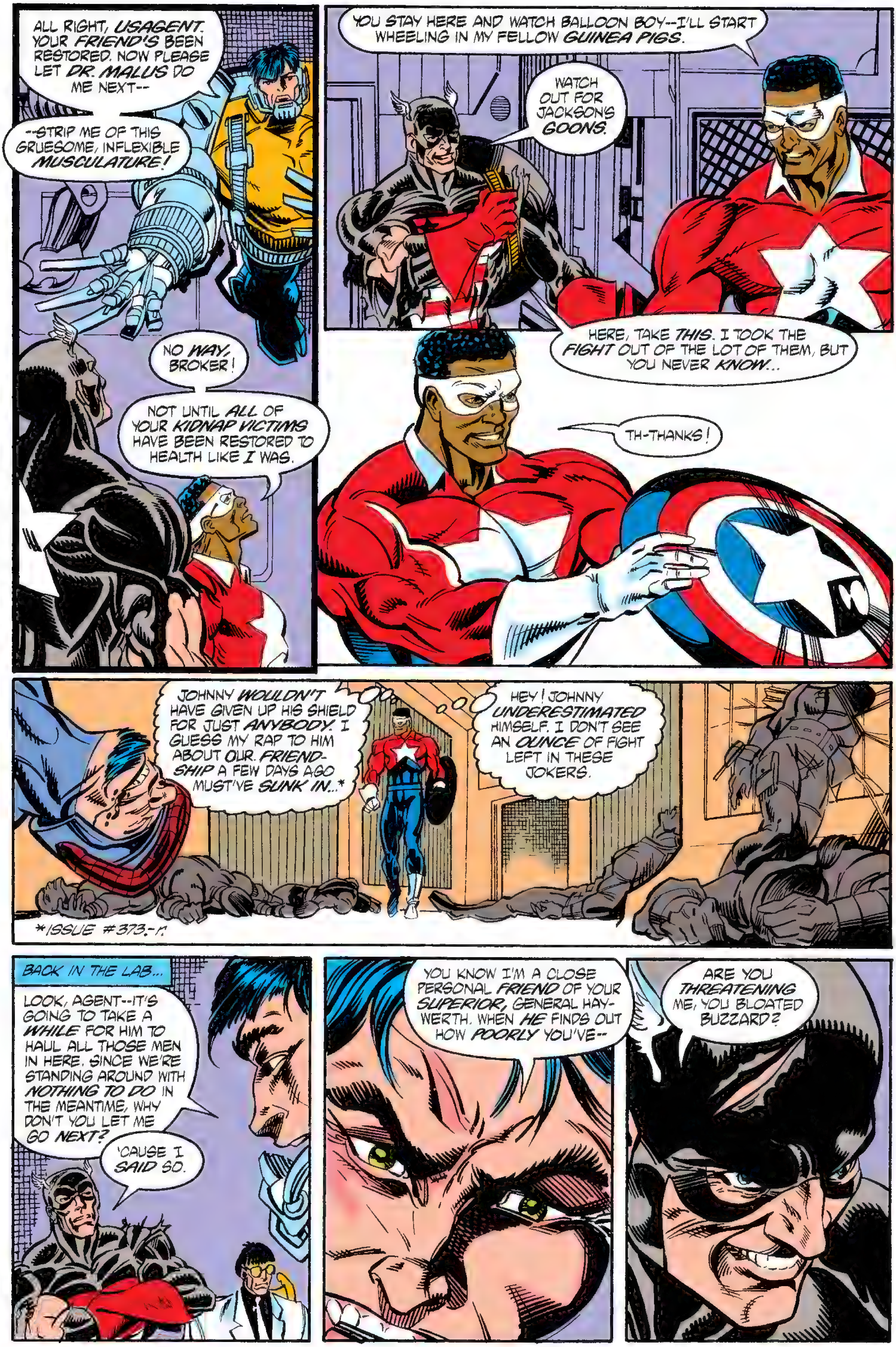

THE GRANDSTAND...
HE CUT ME OFF BEFORE I COULD RECOVER MY SHIELD!
BUT I NOTICE HE'S BEEN FAVORING HIS LEFT SIDE-- THE ARM WITH THE BANDAGE!
IF I WANT TO WIN THIS ONE, I'LL HAVE TO EXPLOIT THAT--
--CONCENTRATE MY ATTACK WHERE HE CAN'T--
WHOUFFF!
AN' HERE I WAS BEGINNIN' TA THINK YA WERE PURPOSELY AVOIDIN' ME!
OOH, TAGGED YOU THAT TIME, HUH?
SAY, CAPPY, I EVER SHOW YOU MY GINSU KNIFE?
IT SLICES, IT DICES, IT--
IT FLIES OUT OF YOUR HAND!
GNNK!
I'M REALLY STARTING TO GET WINDED! I'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY TO FINISH THIS UP QUICK!
WAIT--THE RIBBONS ON HIS MASK--!!!

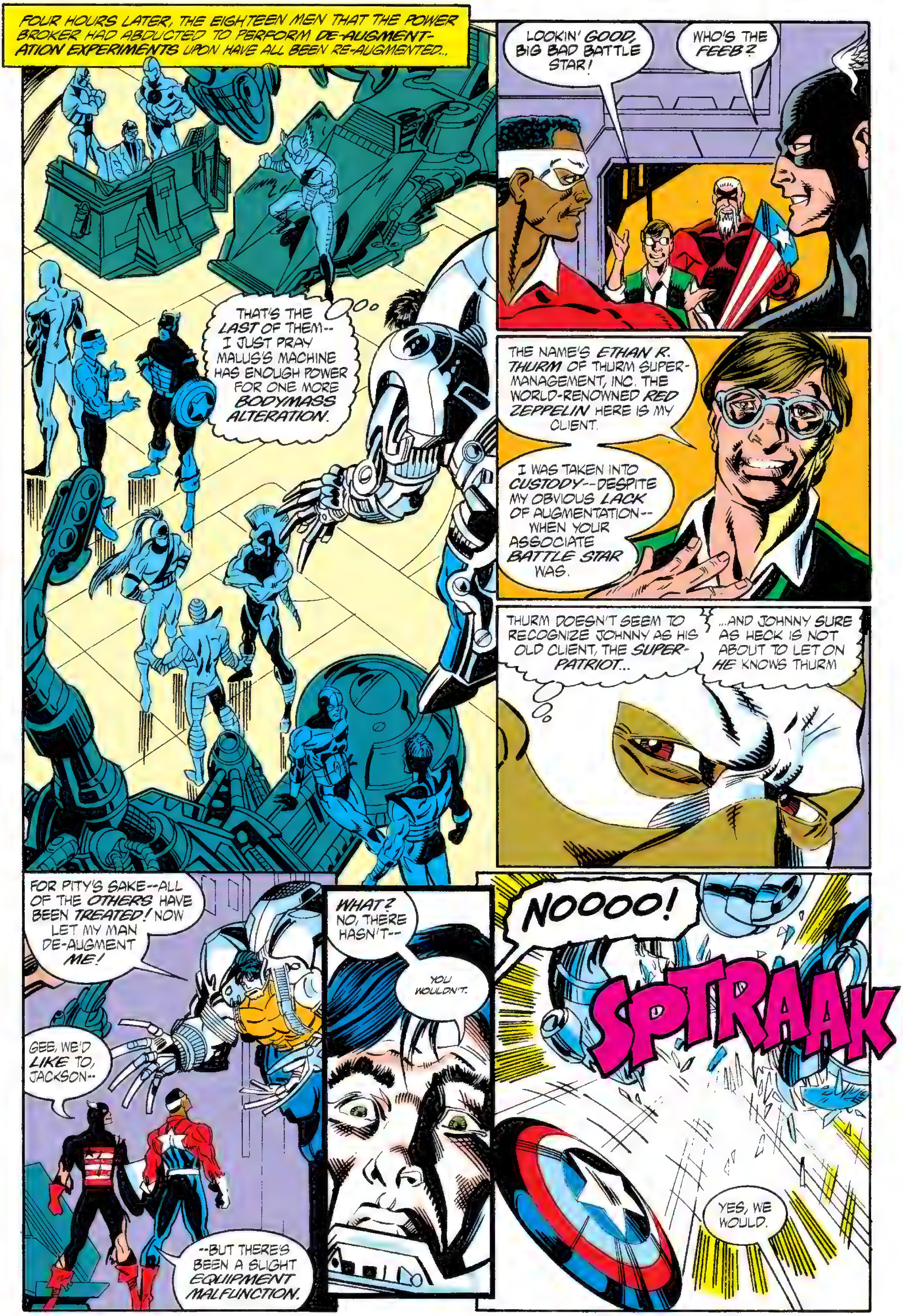
HEY!
YANK 'EM BACK-- SLIDING HIS EYESLITS OUT OF PLACE--
--AND STRIKE WITH ALL MY FLAGGING STRENGTH!
THAKK
I-I'VE DONE IT!
I'VE BEATEN HIM!
WITHOUT THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM--WITH ONLY MY FISTS AND GUTS AND KNOW-HOW--
--I'VE BEATEN AS ROUGH A CUSTOMER AS ANY I'VE EVER TANGLED WITH!
THEN I'VE PROVEN IT! I CAN BE CAPTAIN AMERICA EVEN WITHOUT THE DRUG!

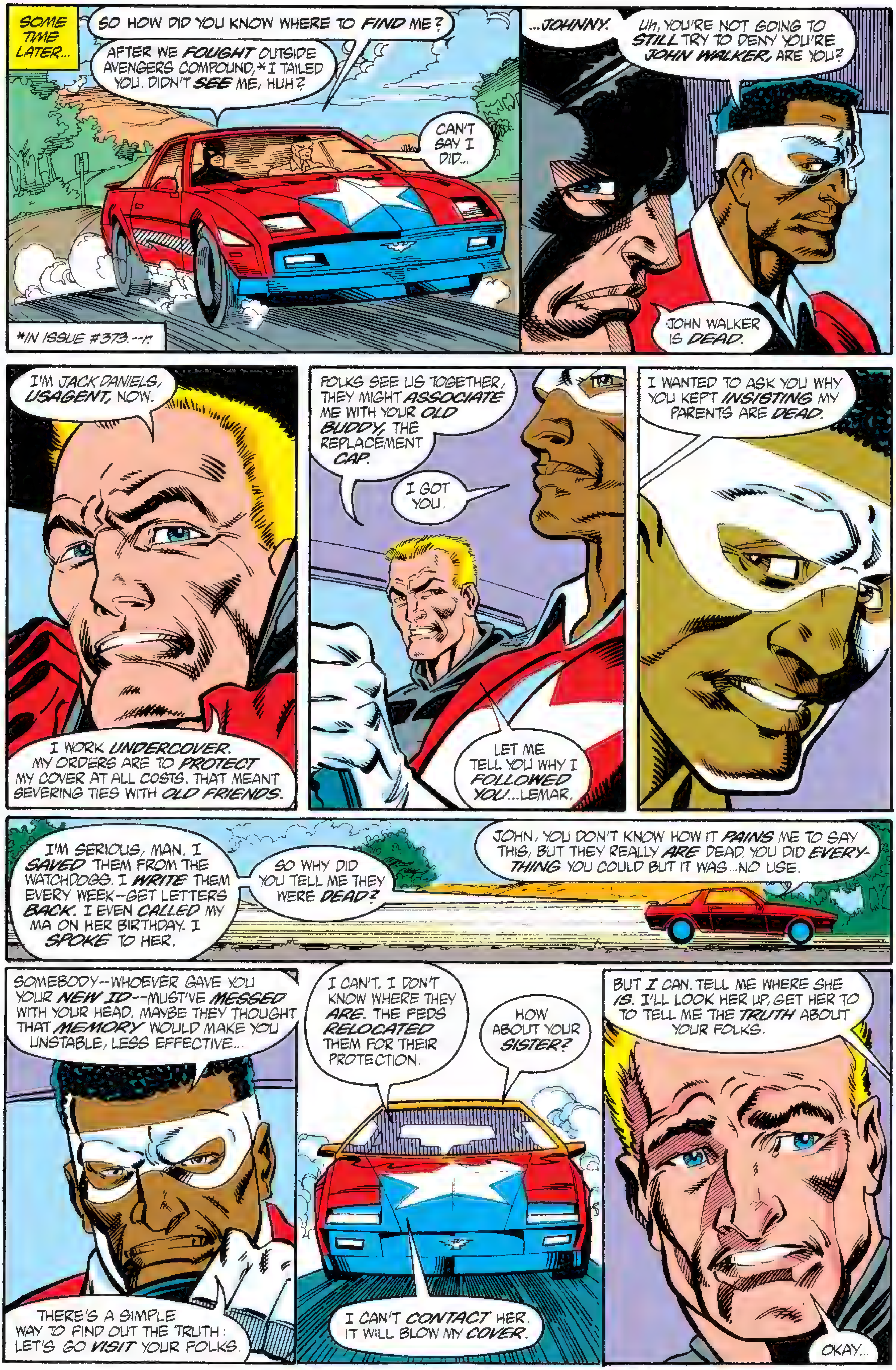

BELOW...
YOU CANNOT MOVE. I HOLD YOUR SKULL IN MY HANDS.
I COULD BURY MY THUMBS IN YOUR EYE SOCKETS...SQUEEZE TILL I CAVED IN YOUR TEMPLES... OR SNAP YOUR NECK WITH A SUDDEN TWIST.
ADMIT DEFEAT, HONOR OUR BARGAIN ...OR DIE.
YES! YOU WIN, BLOATED PIG!
NOW GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON NOT TO KILL YOU ANYWAY!
YOU WILL NEVER GET OUT OF THIS DOME ALIVE WITHOUT ME!
GOOD ENOUGH REASON.
NO TIME TO TAKE A BREATHER. NOW I'VE GOT TO FACE THE SKULL AND A SCORE OF ARMED MEN!
AND THE FUNNY THING IS, I'M CONFIDENT I'M UP TO IT!
BUT...
WHTWHTWHTWHTWHTWHTWHT
THE DOME DISINTEGRATES.
IT MATTERS LITTLE THAT I LOST HERE TONIGHT, KINGPIN! I'M STILL TWICE THE MASTERMIND YOU ARE!
THIS ICE OPERATION WAS PENNY ANTE ANYWAY! I'M HAPPY TO BE RID OF IT! I DESPISE LIMITING MY INTELLECT TO SUCH PAROCHIAL CONCERNS!
I'LL BE IN TOUCH WITH THE TERMS OF OUR SETTLEMENT-- COUNT ON IT... CRIMINAL.


COULD HAVE THROWN MY SHIELD AT THE SKULL, BUT THAT WOULD HAVE LEFT ME WIDE OPEN TO THESE GOONS!
OKAY, KINGPIN, WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
FOR REASONS ALL HIS OWN, THAT NAZI FOE OF YOURS FORCED ME INTO PERSONAL COMBAT. I WON.
NEW YORK CITY OWES ME A DEBT OF GRATITUDE, CAPTAIN. I'VE SAVED IT FROM THAT MADMAN'S DEPRADATIONS.
I'LL SEE TO IT THEY MAKE YOU A BLIMP IN THE THANKSGIVING DAY PARADE.
AFTER ESCORTING THE ASSORTED GANGSTERS OFF THE PREMISES...
THE SKULL GOT AWAY, CROSSBONES VANISHED, AND THERE'S NOTHING I COULD HANG ON THE KINGPIN OR HIS GOONS THAT WOULD STICK.
ON THE OTHER HAND, I'VE GOT GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE THE GANG WAR IS OVER.
AS FOR AMERICA'S DRUG CRISIS...
...I ONLY WISH I KNEW HOW THAT WILL TURN OUT.
AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS, LATER THAT NIGHT...
OH, CAP, WE WERE SO WORRIED.
HATE TO SAY IT, BUT YOU HAD GOOD REASON TO BE.
GOT SOME GOOD NEWS FOR YOU, YOU OLD WARHORSE--
--I'VE LAUNDERED YOUR BLOOD, FILTERED OUT ALL OF THE ICE MOLECULES WITHOUT AFFECTING THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM!
NOW ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS GIVE YOU ANOTHER TRANSFUSION AND--
I APPRECIATE YOUR EFFORTS, HENRY, BUT I FOUND OUT SOMETHING IMPORTANT TONIGHT. I DON'T NEED THE SERUM TO BE CAPTAIN AMERICA.
PERHAPS I ONCE DID, TO GIVE MY NON-ATHLETIC BODY WHAT NATURE DID NOT. BUT THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO.
NOW I AM WHAT I AM WITH OR WITHOUT THE DRUG IN MY VEINS.
I DON'T NEED MY OLD BLOOD BACK. I DON'T WANT IT, EITHER.
YOU SURE ABOUT THIS, CAP?
HEY, IF I CAN'T JUST SAY NO, WHO CAN?
THE END

Stan Lee PRESENTS:
BATTLESTAR
IN ONE OF THE POWER BROKER'S SECRET LABORATORIES SOMEWHERE IN LOS ANGELES, THE SIX-FOOT SUPER-FIGHTER KNOWN AS BATTLE STAR HAS JUST UNDERGONE STRENGTH AUGMENTATION FOR THE SECOND TIME IN HIS LIFE...
I'VE GOT MY MUSCLES BACK! I'M SUPER-STRONG AGAIN!
LOOKS LIKE I'M NOT GOING TO HAVE TO BREAK YOUR ARMS AFTER ALL, MALUS. TOO BAD.
GRAVE CONCERNS
STORY: GRUENWALD | PENCILS: BAGLEY | INKS: PANOSIAN | LETTERS: ROBINS | COLORS: YOMTOV


ALL RIGHT, USAGENT. YOUR FRIEND'S BEEN RESTORED. NOW PLEASE LET DR. MALUS DO ME NEXT--
--STRIP ME OF THIS GRUESOME, INFLEXIBLE MUSCULATURE!
NO WAY, BROKER!
NOT UNTIL ALL OF YOUR KIDNAP VICTIMS HAVE BEEN RESTORED TO HEALTH LIKE I WAS.
YOU STAY HERE AND WATCH BALLOON BOY--I'LL START WHEELING IN MY FELLOW GUINEA PIGS.
WATCH OUT FOR JACKSON'S GOONS.
HERE, TAKE THIS. I TOOK THE FIGHT OUT OF THE LOT OF THEM, BUT YOU NEVER KNOW...
TH-THANKS!
JOHNNY WOULDN'T HAVE GIVEN UP HIS SHIELD FOR JUST ANYBODY. I GUESS MY RAP TO HIM ABOUT OUR FRIENDSHIP A FEW DAYS AGO MUST'VE SUNK IN...*
HEY! JOHNNY UNDERESTIMATED HIMSELF. I DON'T SEE AN OUNCE OF FIGHT LEFT IN THESE JOKERS.
*ISSUE #373.-r.
BACK IN THE LAB...
LOOK, AGENT--IT'S GOING TO TAKE A WHILE FOR HIM TO HAUL ALL THOSE MEN IN HERE. SINCE WE'RE STANDING AROUND WITH NOTHING TO DO IN THE MEANTIME, WHY DON'T YOU LET ME GO NEXT?
'CAUSE I SAID SO.
YOU KNOW I'M A CLOSE PERSONAL FRIEND OF YOUR SUPERIOR, GENERAL HAYWERTH. WHEN HE FINDS OUT HOW POORLY YOU'VE--
ARE YOU THREATENING ME, YOU BLOATED BUZZARD?


FOUR HOURS LATER, THE EIGHTEEN MEN THAT THE POWER BROKER HAD ABDUCTED TO PERFORM DE-AUGMENTATION EXPERIMENTS UPON HAVE ALL BEEN RE-AUGMENTED...
THAT'S THE LAST OF THEM-- I JUST PRAY MALUS'S MACHINE HAS ENOUGH POWER FOR ONE MORE BODYMASS ALTERATION.
LOOKIN' GOOD, BIG BAD BATTLE STAR!
WHO'S THE FEEB?
THE NAME'S ETHAN R. THURM OF THURM SUPER-MANAGEMENT, INC. THE WORLD-RENOWNED RED ZEPPELIN HERE IS MY CLIENT.
I WAS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY--DESPITE MY OBVIOUS LACK OF AUGMENTATION--WHEN YOUR ASSOCIATE BATTLE STAR WAS.
THURM DOESN'T SEEM TO RECOGNIZE JOHNNY AS HIS OLD CLIENT, THE SUPER-PATRIOT...
...AND JOHNNY SURE AS HECK IS NOT ABOUT TO LET ON HE KNOWS THURM
FOR PITY'S SAKE--ALL OF THE OTHERS HAVE BEEN TREATED! NOW LET MY MAN DE-AUGMENT ME!
GEE, WE'D LIKE TO, JACKSON--
--BUT THERE'S BEEN A SLIGHT EQUIPMENT MALFUNCTION.
WHAT? NO, THERE HASN'T--
YOU WOULDN'T.
NOOOO!
SPTRAAK
YES, WE WOULD.


SOME TIME LATER...
SO HOW DID YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME?
AFTER WE FOUGHT OUTSIDE AVENGERS COMPOUND,* I TAILED YOU. DIDN'T SEE ME, HUH?
CAN'T SAY I DID...
*IN ISSUE #373.--r.
...JOHNNY.
Uh, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO STILL TRY TO DENY YOU'RE JOHN WALKER, ARE YOU?
JOHN WALKER IS DEAD.
I'M JACK DANIELS, USAGENT, NOW.
I WORK UNDERCOVER. MY ORDERS ARE TO PROTECT MY COVER AT ALL COSTS. THAT MEANT SEVERING TIES WITH OLD FRIENDS.
FOLKS SEE US TOGETHER, THEY MIGHT ASSOCIATE ME WITH YOUR OLD BUDDY, THE REPLACEMENT CAP.
I GOT YOU.
LET ME TELL YOU WHY I FOLLOWED YOU...LEMAR.
I WANTED TO ASK YOU WHY YOU KEPT INSISTING MY PARENTS ARE DEAD.
I'M SERIOUS, MAN. I SAVED THEM FROM THE WATCHDOGS. I WRITE THEM EVERY WEEK--GET LETTERS BACK. I EVEN CALLED MY MA ON HER BIRTHDAY. I SPOKE TO HER.
SO WHY DID YOU TELL ME THEY WERE DEAD?
JOHN, YOU DON'T KNOW HOW IT PAINS ME TO SAY THIS, BUT THEY REALLY ARE DEAD. YOU DID EVERYTHING YOU COULD BUT IT WAS...NO USE.
SOMEBODY--WHOEVER GAVE YOU YOUR NEW ID--MUST'VE MESSED WITH YOUR HEAD. MAYBE THEY THOUGHT THAT MEMORY WOULD MAKE YOU UNSTABLE, LESS EFFECTIVE...
THERE'S A SIMPLE WAY TO FIND OUT THE TRUTH: LET'S GO VISIT YOUR FOLKS.
I CAN'T. I DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY ARE. THE FEDS RELOCATED THEM FOR THEIR PROTECTION.
HOW ABOUT YOUR SISTER?
I CAN'T CONTACT HER. IT WILL BLOW MY COVER.
BUT I CAN. TELL ME WHERE SHE IS. I'LL LOOK HER UP, GET HER TO TO TELL ME THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR FOLKS.
OKAY...

CUSTER'S GROVE, GEORGIA... 36 HOURS LATER...
FOREST ESTATES
CALEB WALKER
JUNE 2, 1930 - MAY 3
EMILY WALK
AUGUST 22, 1936 - MAY
BELOVED PARENTS
END.

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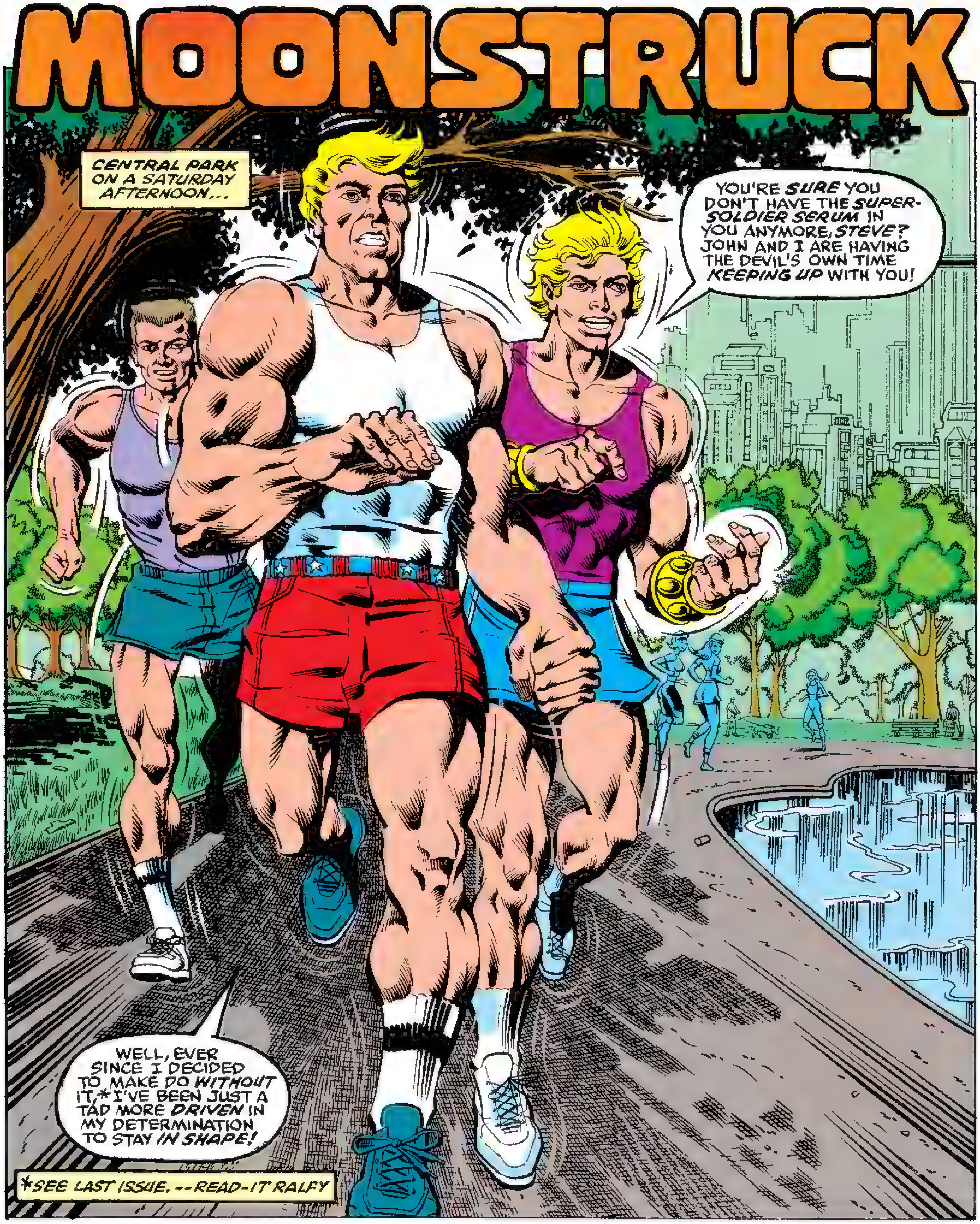
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
ENTER: NEFARIUS!

STEVE ROGERS . . . BORN IN THE U.S.A., RAISED TO CHERISH THE IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY, ENDOWED WITH A SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE, AND DRIVEN TO BE THE MOST CAPABLE COMBATANT IN THE WORLD. NOW AS BOTH LONE CRUSADER AND LEADER OF THE RENOWNED AVENGERS, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM! STAN LEE PRESENTS . . . CAPTAIN AMERICA!

MOONSTRUCK


CENTRAL PARK ON A SATURDAY AFTERNOON...
YOU'RE *SURE* YOU DON'T HAVE THE *SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM* IN YOU ANYMORE, *STEVE?* JOHN AND I ARE HAVING THE DEVIL'S OWN TIME *KEEPING UP* WITH YOU!
WELL, EVER SINCE I DECIDED TO MAKE DO *WITHOUT* IT,* I'VE BEEN JUST A TAD MORE *DRIVEN* IN MY DETERMINATION TO STAY *IN SHAPE!*
*SEE LAST ISSUE. --READ-IT RALFY

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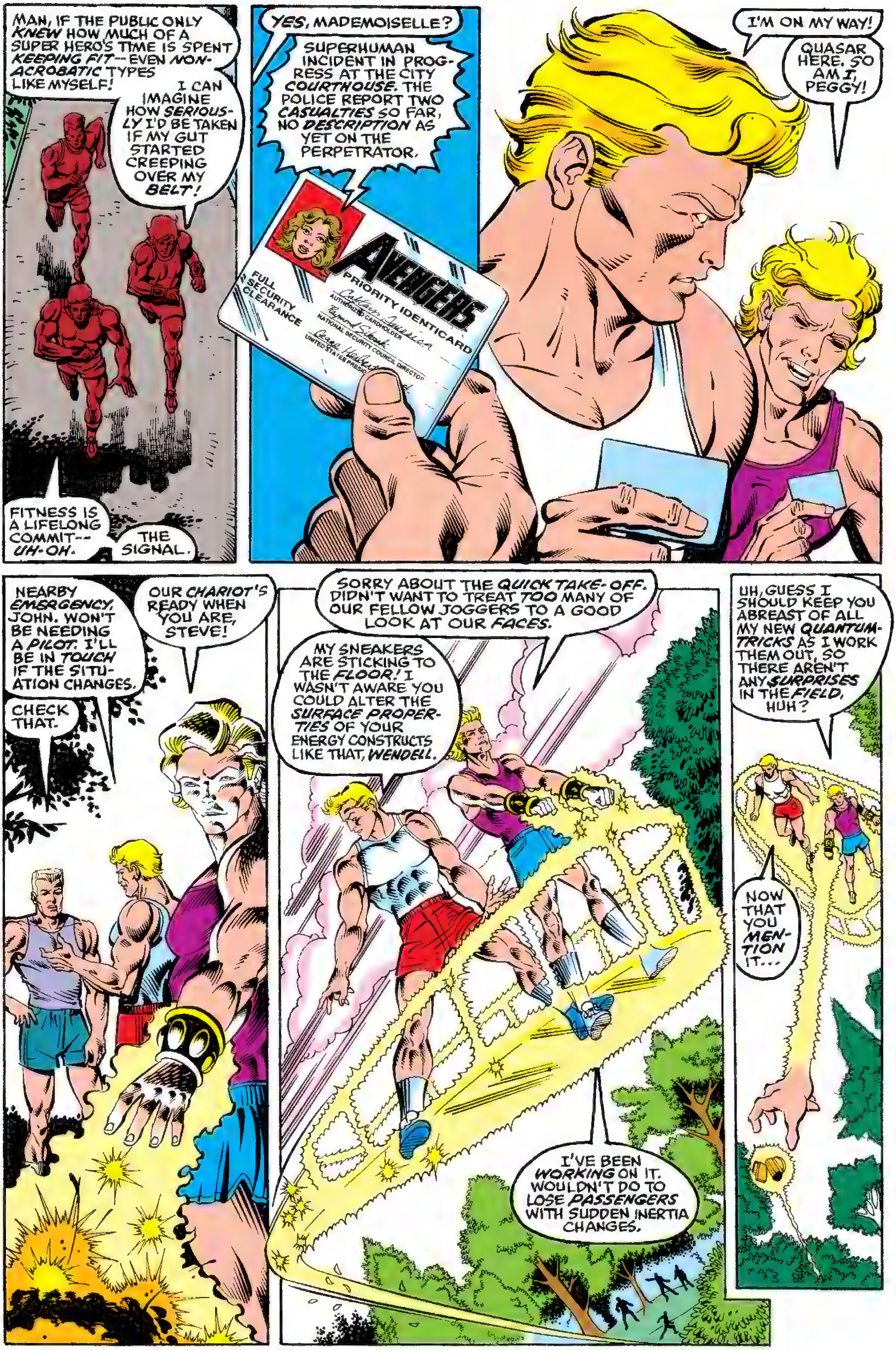
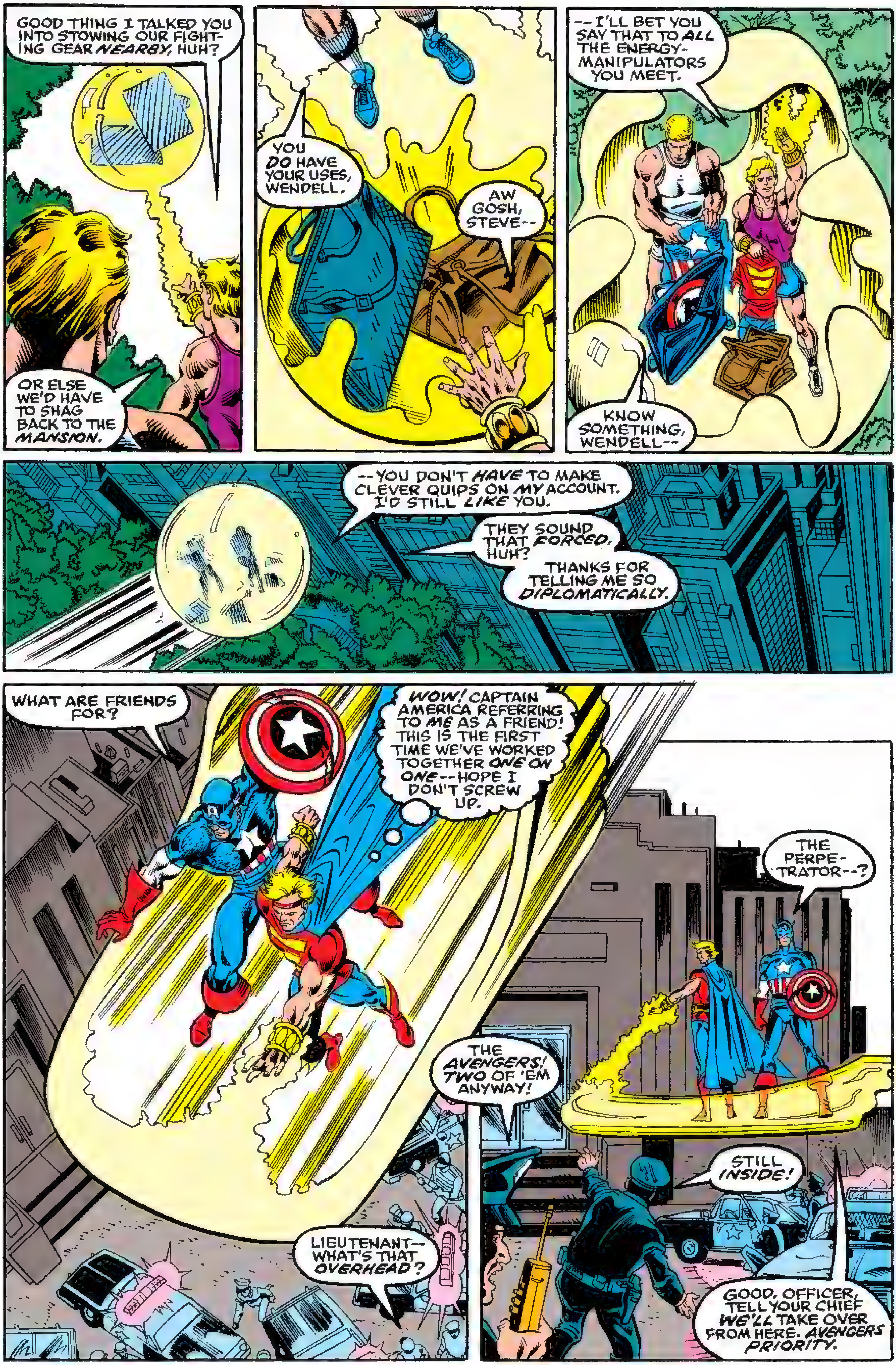
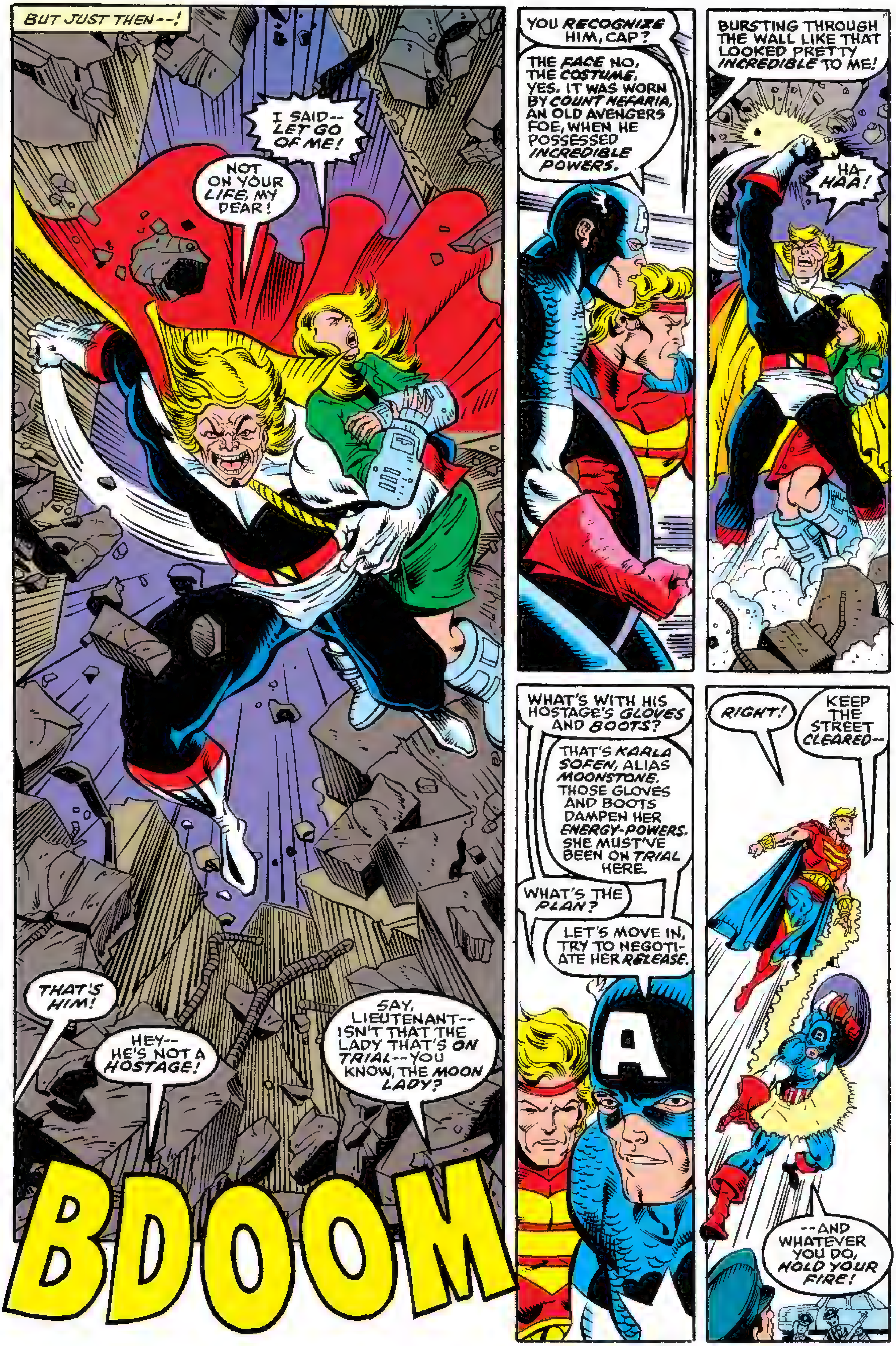
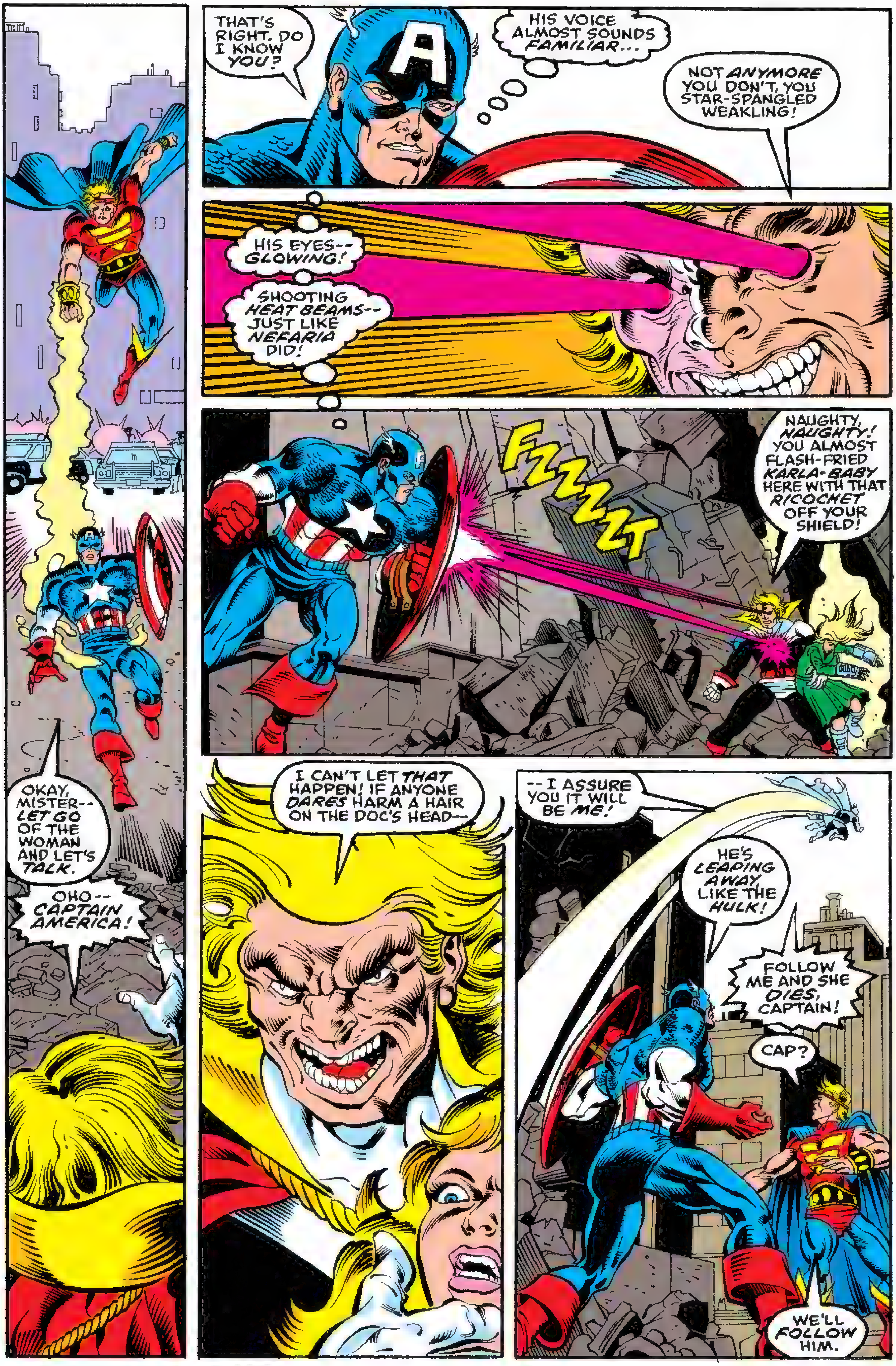
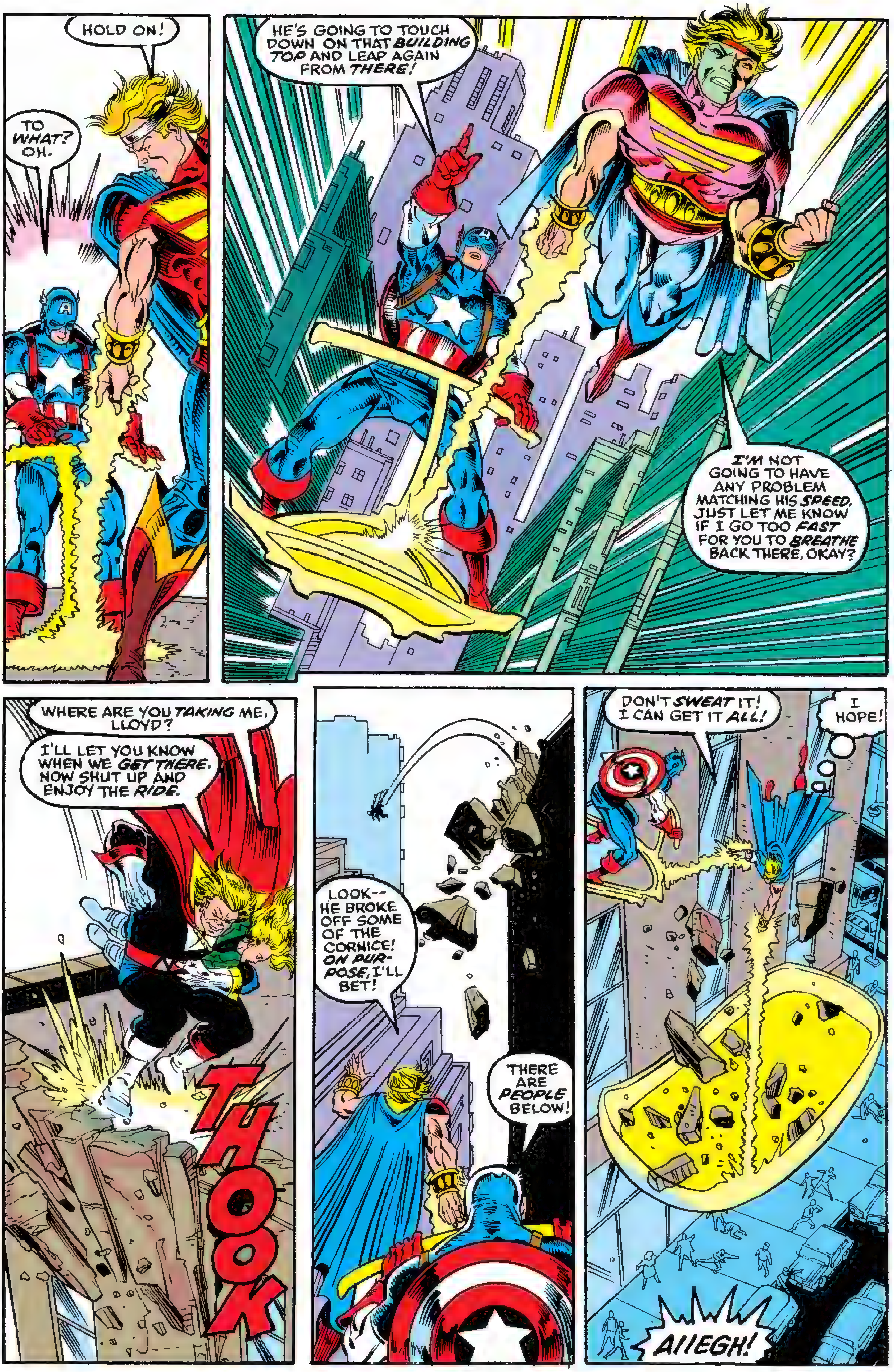
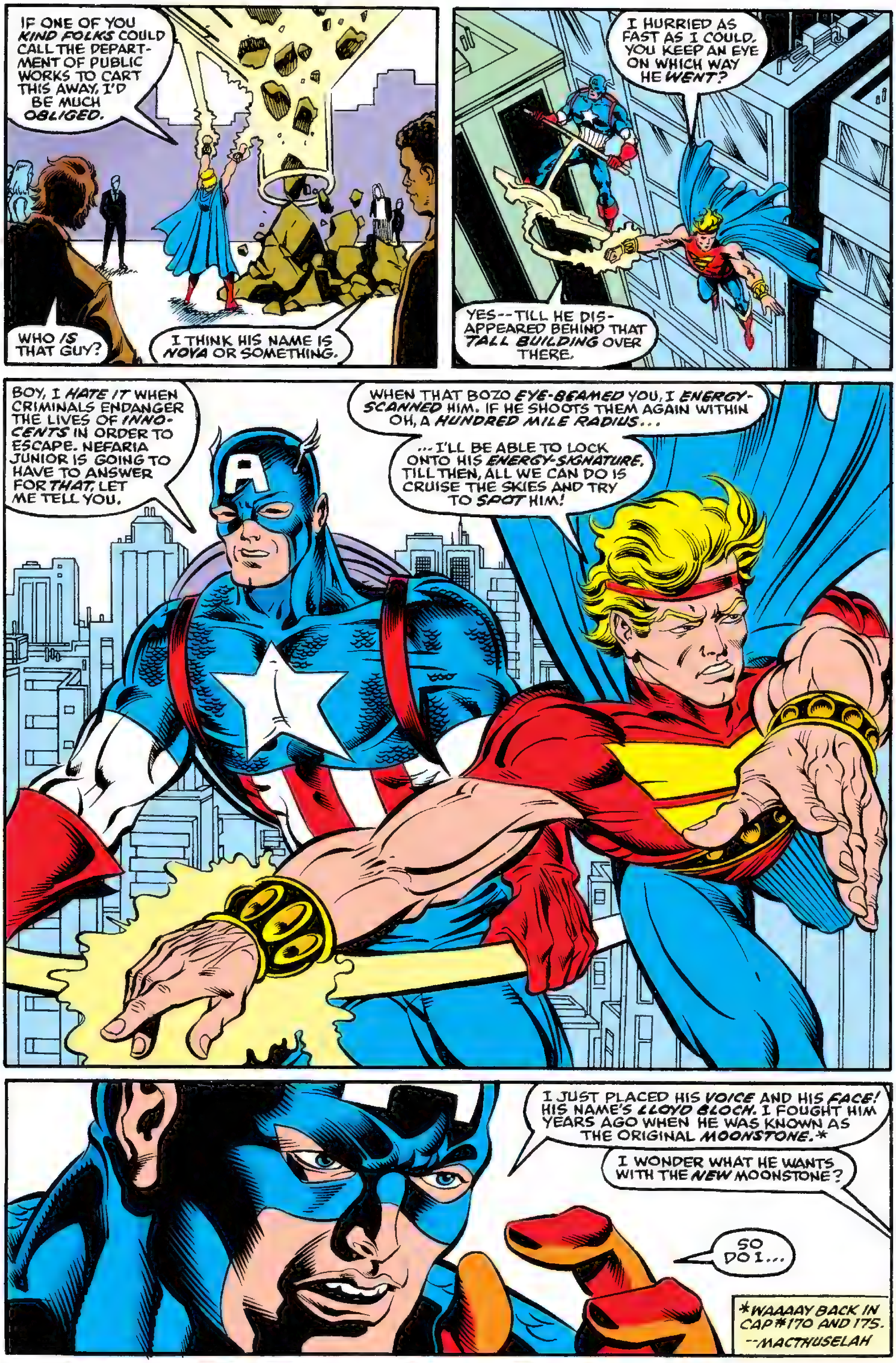

MAN, IF THE PUBLIC ONLY KNEW HOW MUCH OF A SUPER HERO'S TIME IS SPENT KEEPING FIT-- EVEN NON-ACROBATIC TYPES LIKE MYSELF!
I CAN IMAGINE HOW SERIOUSLY I'D BE TAKEN IF MY GUT STARTED CREEPING OVER MY BELT!
FITNESS IS A LIFELONG COMMIT-- UH-OH.
THE SIGNAL.
YES, MADEMOISELLE?
SUPERHUMAN INCIDENT IN PROGRESS AT THE CITY COURTHOUSE. THE POLICE REPORT TWO CASUALTIES SO FAR, NO DESCRIPTION AS YET ON THE PERPETRATOR.
AVENGERS
PRIORITY IDENTICARD
FULL SECURITY CLEARANCE
AUTHORIZED CARDHOLDER
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL DIRECTOR
UNITED STATES PRESIDENT
I'M ON MY WAY!
QUASAR HERE. SO AM I, PEGGY!
NEARBY EMERGENCY, JOHN. WON'T BE NEEDING A PILOT. I'LL BE IN TOUCH IF THE SITUATION CHANGES.
OUR CHARIOT'S READY WHEN YOU ARE, STEVE!
CHECK THAT.
SORRY ABOUT THE QUICK TAKE-OFF. DIDN'T WANT TO TREAT TOO MANY OF OUR FELLOW JOGGERS TO A GOOD LOOK AT OUR FACES.
MY SNEAKERS ARE STICKING TO THE FLOOR! I WASN'T AWARE YOU COULD ALTER THE SURFACE PROPERTIES OF YOUR ENERGY CONSTRUCTS LIKE THAT, WENDELL.
I'VE BEEN WORKING ON IT. WOULDN'T DO TO LOSE PASSENGERS WITH SUDDEN INERTIA CHANGES.
UH, GUESS I SHOULD KEEP YOU ABREAST OF ALL MY NEW QUANTUM-TRICKS AS I WORK THEM OUT, SO THERE AREN'T ANY SURPRISES IN THE FIELD, HUH?
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT...

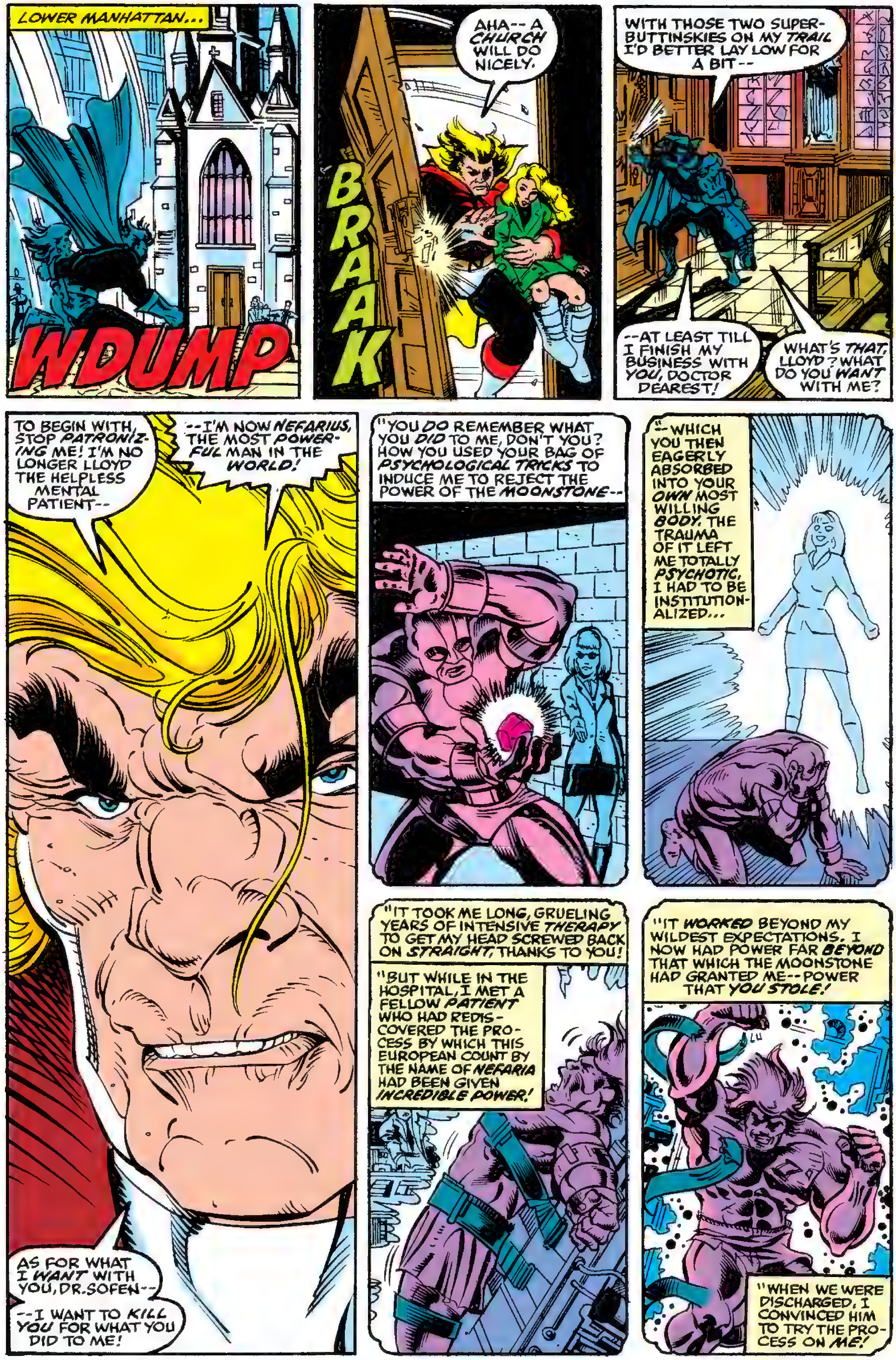

GOOD THING I TALKED YOU INTO STOWING OUR FIGHTING GEAR *NEARBY*, HUH?
OR ELSE WE'D HAVE TO SHAG BACK TO THE *MANSION*.
YOU *DO* HAVE YOUR USES, WENDELL.
AW GOSH, STEVE--
--I'LL BET YOU SAY THAT TO *ALL* THE ENERGY-MANIPULATORS YOU MEET.
KNOW SOMETHING, WENDELL--
--YOU DON'T *HAVE* TO MAKE CLEVER QUIPS ON *MY* ACCOUNT. I'D STILL *LIKE* YOU.
THEY SOUND THAT *FORCED*, HUH?
THANKS FOR TELLING ME SO *DIPLOMATICALLY*.
WHAT ARE FRIENDS FOR?
WOW! CAPTAIN AMERICA REFERRING TO *ME* AS A FRIEND! THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE'VE WORKED TOGETHER *ONE ON ONE*--HOPE I DON'T SCREW UP.
LIEUTENANT--WHAT'S THAT *OVERHEAD*?
THE *AVENGERS*! *TWO* OF 'EM ANYWAY!
GOOD, OFFICER. TELL YOUR CHIEF *WE'LL* TAKE OVER FROM HERE. *AVENGERS PRIORITY*.
THE PERPETRATOR--?
STILL *INSIDE*!

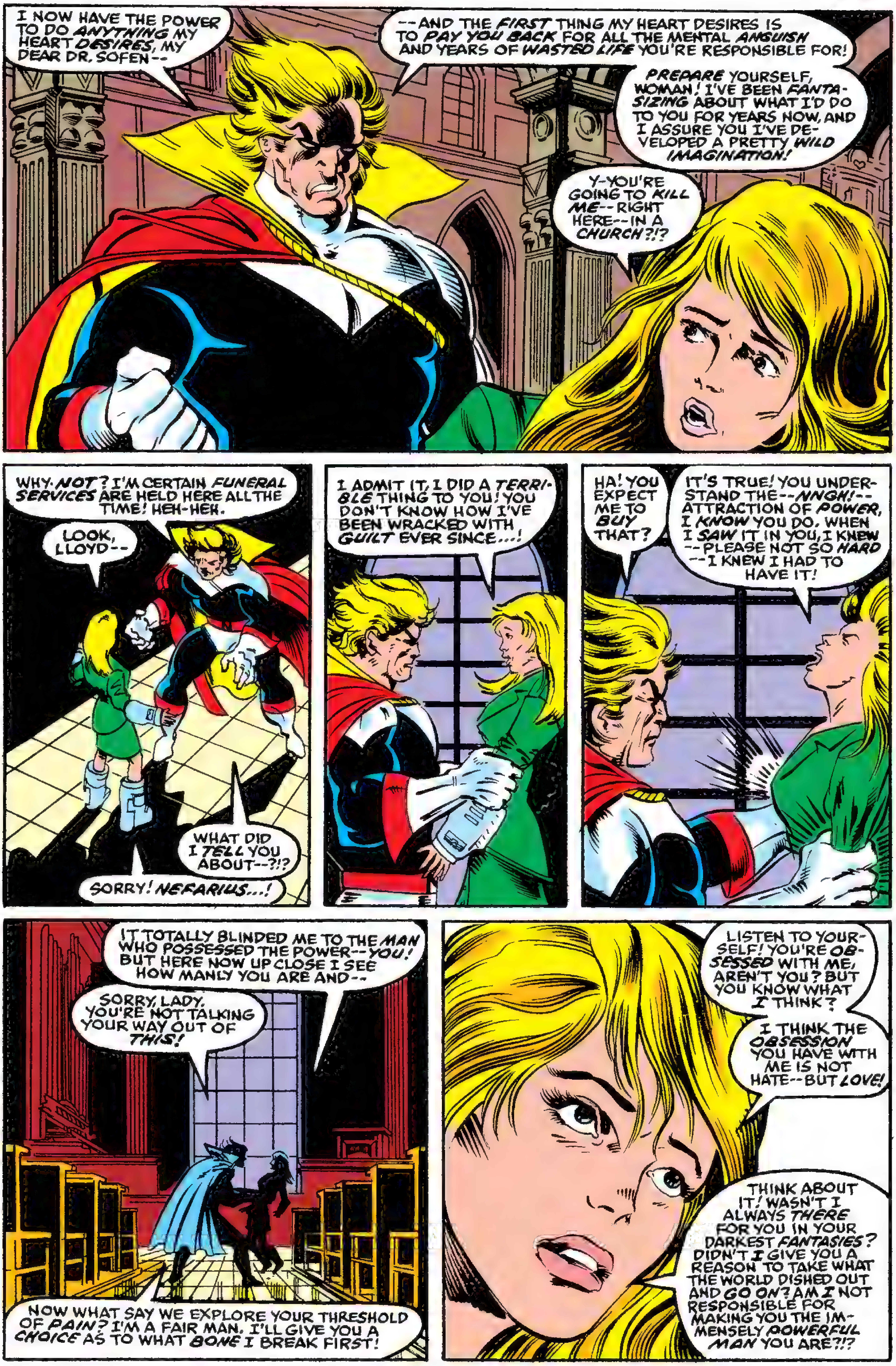

BUT JUST THEN--!
I SAID-- LET GO OF ME!
NOT ON YOUR LIFE, MY DEAR!
THAT'S HIM!
HEY-- HE'S NOT A HOSTAGE!
SAY, LIEUTENANT-- ISN'T THAT THE LADY THAT'S ON TRIAL--YOU KNOW, THE MOON LADY?
BDOOM
YOU RECOGNIZE HIM, CAP?
THE FACE NO, THE COSTUME, YES. IT WAS WORN BY COUNT NEFARIA, AN OLD AVENGERS FOE, WHEN HE POSSESSED INCREDIBLE POWERS.
BURSTING THROUGH THE WALL LIKE THAT LOOKED PRETTY INCREDIBLE TO ME!
HA-HAA!
WHAT'S WITH HIS HOSTAGE'S GLOVES AND BOOTS?
THAT'S KARLA SOFEN, ALIAS MOONSTONE. THOSE GLOVES AND BOOTS DAMPEN HER ENERGY-POWERS. SHE MUST'VE BEEN ON TRIAL HERE.
WHAT'S THE PLAN?
LET'S MOVE IN, TRY TO NEGOTIATE HER RELEASE.
RIGHT!
KEEP THE STREET CLEARED--
--AND WHATEVER YOU DO, HOLD YOUR FIRE!

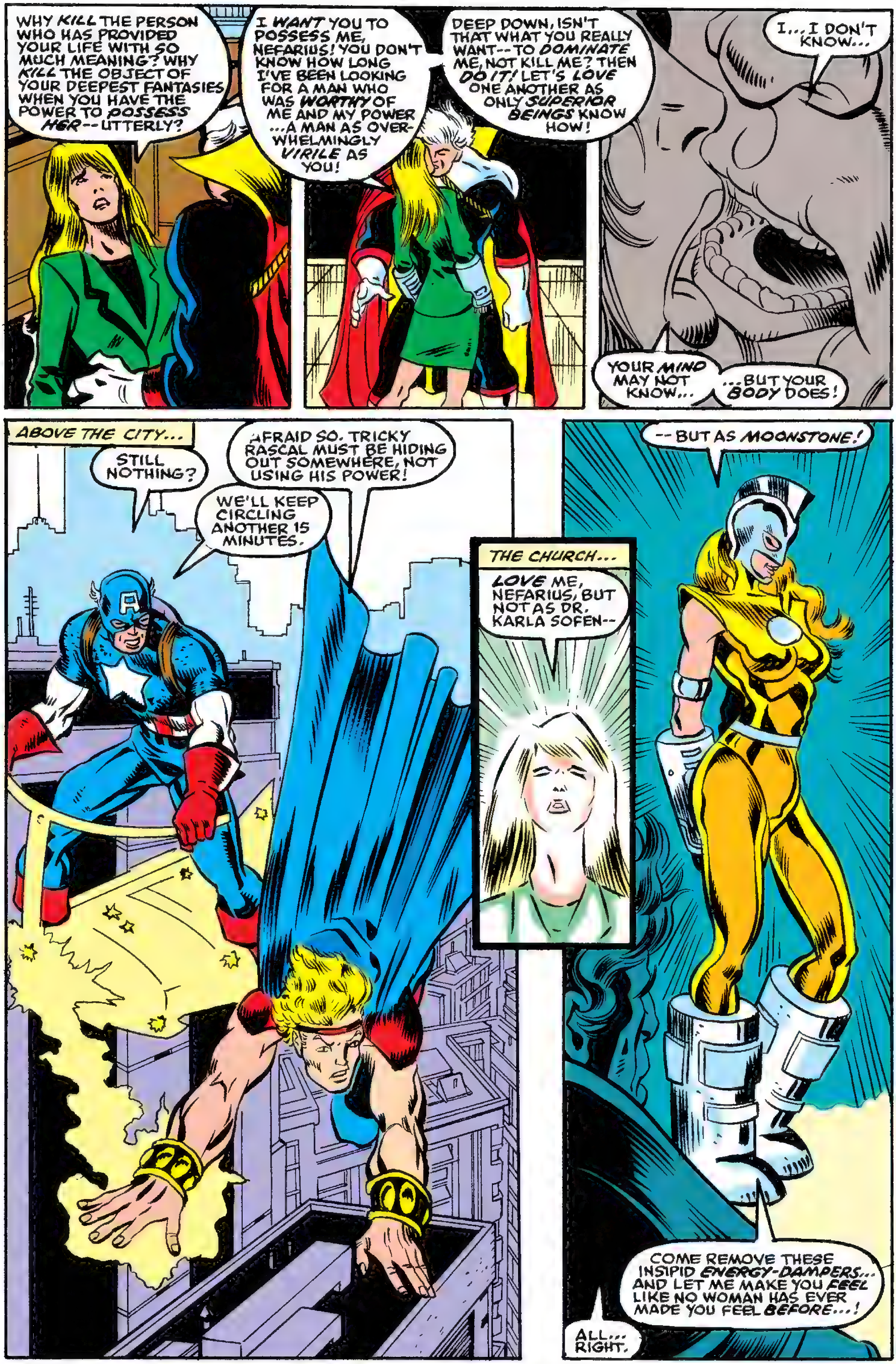

OKAY, MISTER-- LET GO OF THE WOMAN AND LET'S TALK.
OHO-- CAPTAIN AMERICA!
THAT'S RIGHT. DO I KNOW YOU?
HIS VOICE ALMOST SOUNDS FAMILIAR...
NOT ANYMORE YOU DON'T, YOU STAR-SPANGLED WEAKLING!
HIS EYES-- GLOWING!
SHOOTING HEAT BEAMS-- JUST LIKE NEFARIA DID!
FZZZZT
NAUGHTY, NAUGHTY! YOU ALMOST FLASH-FRIED KARLA-BABY HERE WITH THAT RICOCHET OFF YOUR SHIELD!
I CAN'T LET THAT HAPPEN! IF ANYONE DARES HARM A HAIR ON THE DOC'S HEAD--
--I ASSURE YOU IT WILL BE ME!
HE'S LEAPING AWAY, LIKE THE HULK!
FOLLOW ME AND SHE DIES, CAPTAIN!
CAP?
WE'LL FOLLOW HIM.

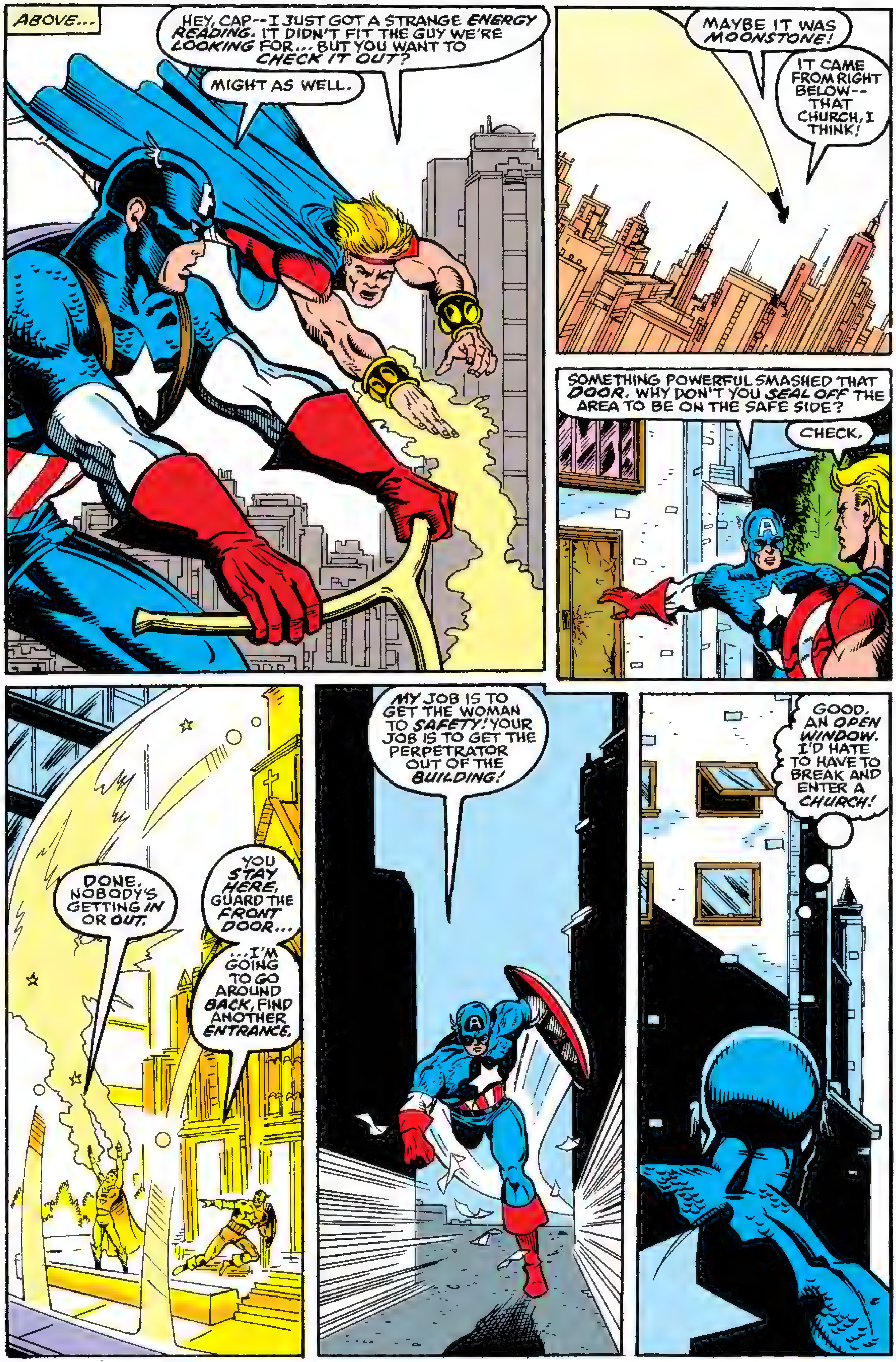

HOLD ON!
TO *WHAT?* OH.
HE'S GOING TO TOUCH DOWN ON THAT *BUILDING TOP* AND LEAP AGAIN FROM *THERE!*
I'M NOT GOING TO HAVE ANY PROBLEM MATCHING HIS *SPEED.* JUST LET ME KNOW IF I GO TOO *FAST* FOR YOU TO *BREATHE* BACK THERE, OKAY?
WHERE ARE YOU *TAKING* ME, LLOYD?
I'LL LET YOU KNOW WHEN WE *GET THERE.* NOW SHUT UP AND ENJOY THE *RIDE.*
THOOK
LOOK-- HE BROKE OFF SOME OF THE CORNICE! *ON PURPOSE,* I'LL BET!
THERE ARE *PEOPLE* BELOW!
DON'T *SWEAT* IT! I CAN GET IT *ALL!*
I HOPE!
AIIEGH!

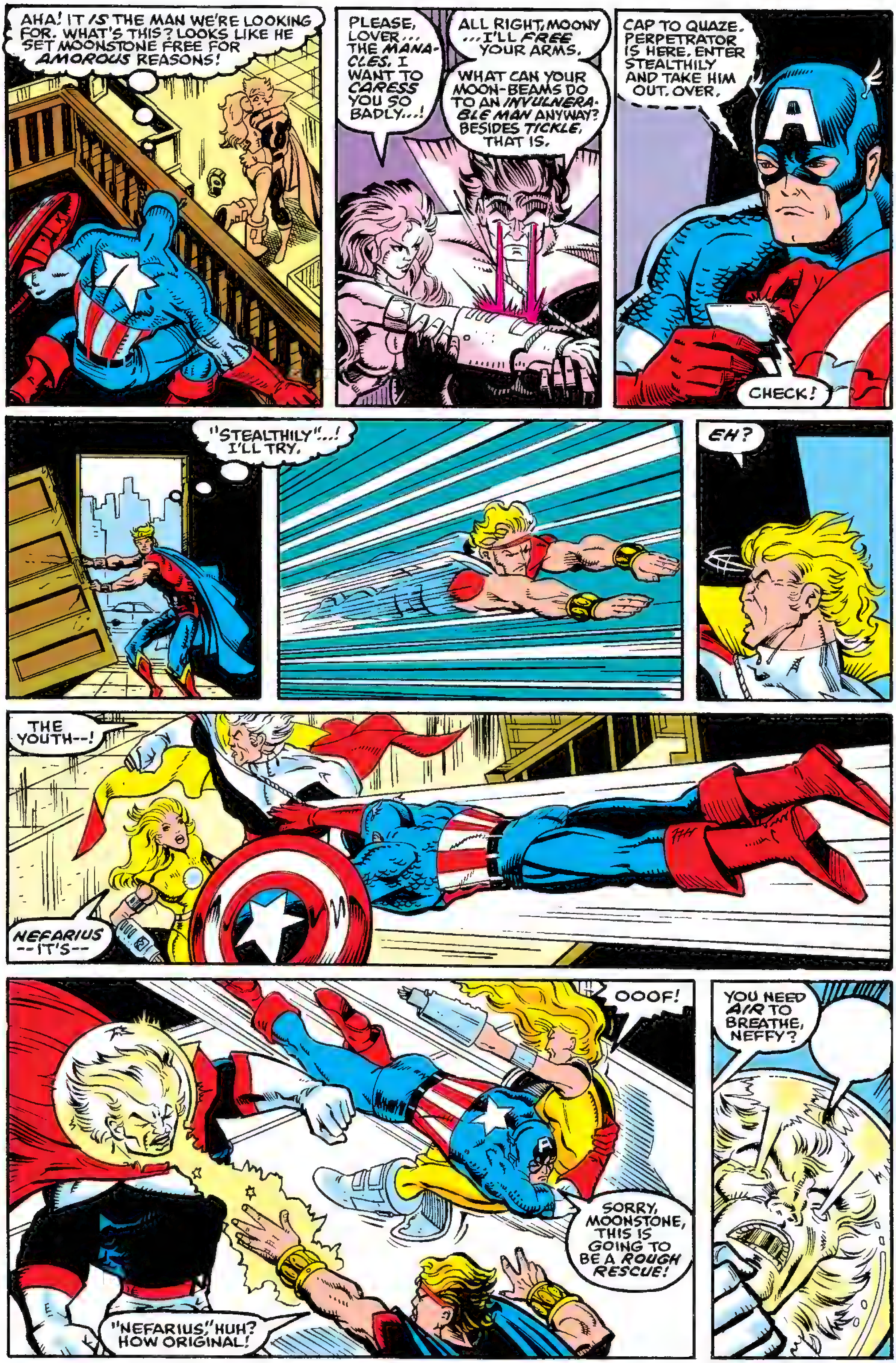

IF ONE OF YOU *KIND FOLKS* COULD CALL THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS TO CART THIS AWAY, I'D BE MUCH *OBLIGED.*
WHO *IS* THAT GUY?
I THINK HIS NAME IS *NOVA* OR SOMETHING.
I HURRIED AS FAST AS I COULD. YOU KEEP AN EYE ON WHICH WAY HE *WENT?*
YES--TILL HE DISAPPEARED BEHIND THAT *TALL BUILDING* OVER THERE.
BOY, I *HATE IT* WHEN CRIMINALS ENDANGER THE LIVES OF *INNOCENTS* IN ORDER TO ESCAPE. NEFARIA JUNIOR IS GOING TO HAVE TO ANSWER FOR *THAT,* LET ME TELL YOU.
WHEN THAT BOZO *EYE-BEAMED* YOU, I *ENERGY-SCANNED* HIM. IF HE SHOOTS THEM AGAIN WITHIN OH, A *HUNDRED MILE RADIUS...*
...I'LL BE ABLE TO LOCK ONTO HIS *ENERGY-SIGNATURE.* TILL THEN, ALL WE CAN DO IS CRUISE THE SKIES AND TRY TO *SPOT* HIM!
I JUST PLACED HIS *VOICE* AND HIS *FACE!* HIS NAME'S *LLOYD BLOCH.* I FOUGHT HIM YEARS AGO WHEN HE WAS KNOWN AS THE ORIGINAL *MOONSTONE.**
I WONDER WHAT HE WANTS WITH THE *NEW* MOONSTONE?
SO DO I...
**WAAAAY BACK IN CAP #170 AND 175.* --*MACTHUSELAH*

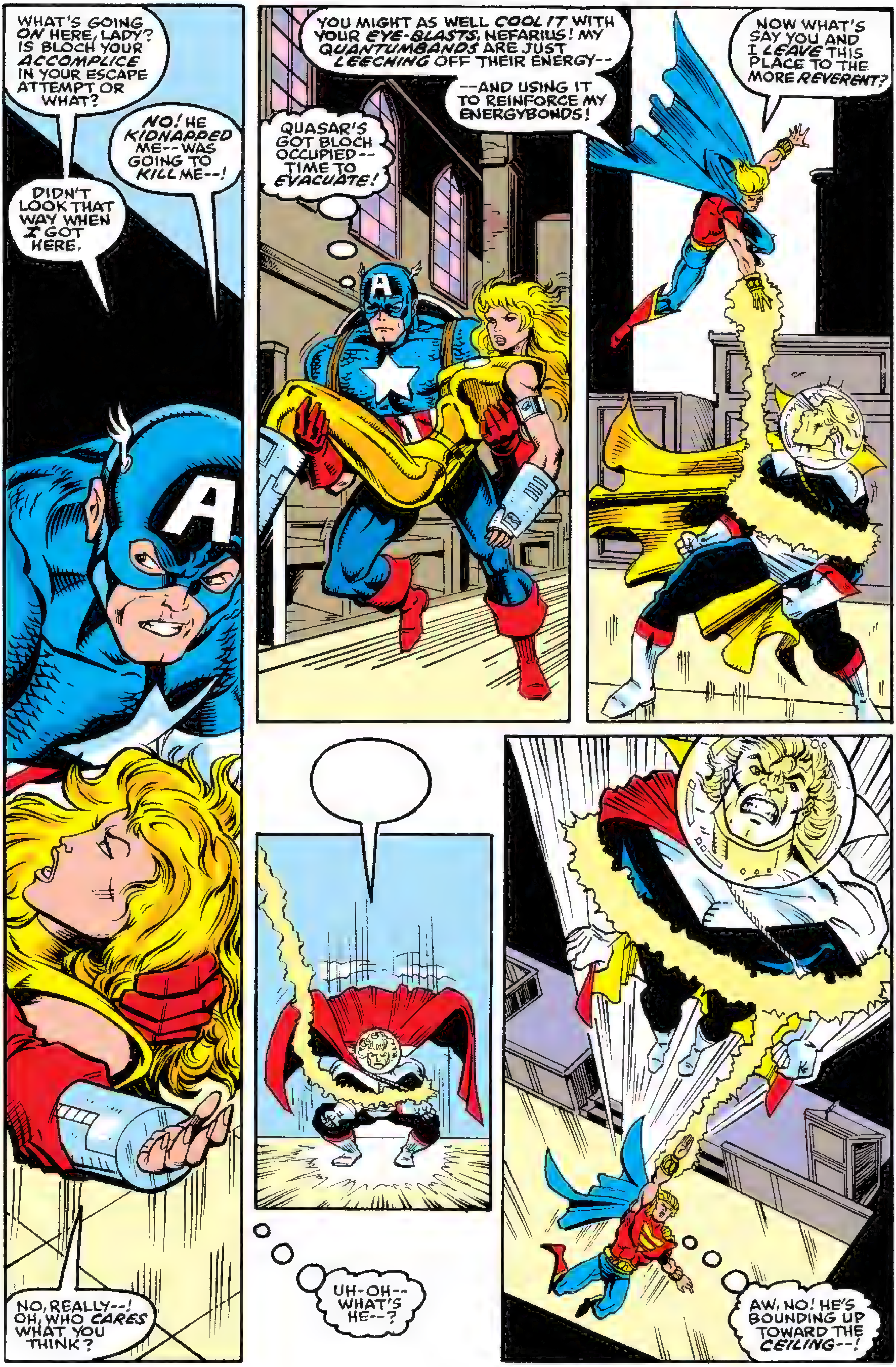

LOWER MANHATTAN...
WDUMP
AHA-- A CHURCH WILL DO NICELY.
BRAAAK
WITH THOSE TWO SUPER-BUTTINSKIES ON MY TRAIL I'D BETTER LAY LOW FOR A BIT--
--AT LEAST TILL I FINISH MY BUSINESS WITH YOU, DOCTOR DEAREST!
WHAT'S THAT, LLOYD? WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH ME?
TO BEGIN WITH, STOP PATRONIZING ME! I'M NO LONGER LLOYD THE HELPLESS MENTAL PATIENT--
--I'M NOW NEFARIUS, THE MOST POWERFUL MAN IN THE WORLD!
AS FOR WHAT I WANT WITH YOU, DR. SOFEN--
--I WANT TO KILL YOU FOR WHAT YOU DID TO ME!
"YOU DO REMEMBER WHAT YOU DID TO ME, DON'T YOU? HOW YOU USED YOUR BAG OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TRICKS TO INDUCE ME TO REJECT THE POWER OF THE MOONSTONE--
"--WHICH YOU THEN EAGERLY ABSORBED INTO YOUR OWN MOST WILLING BODY. THE TRAUMA OF IT LEFT ME TOTALLY PSYCHOTIC. I HAD TO BE INSTITUTIONALIZED...
"IT TOOK ME LONG, GRUELING YEARS OF INTENSIVE THERAPY TO GET MY HEAD SCREWED BACK ON STRAIGHT, THANKS TO YOU!
"BUT WHILE IN THE HOSPITAL, I MET A FELLOW PATIENT WHO HAD REDISCOVERED THE PROCESS BY WHICH THIS EUROPEAN COUNT BY THE NAME OF NEFARIA HAD BEEN GIVEN INCREDIBLE POWER!
"IT WORKED BEYOND MY WILDEST EXPECTATIONS. I NOW HAD POWER FAR BEYOND THAT WHICH THE MOONSTONE HAD GRANTED ME--POWER THAT YOU STOLE!
"WHEN WE WERE DISCHARGED, I CONVINCED HIM TO TRY THE PROCESS ON ME!

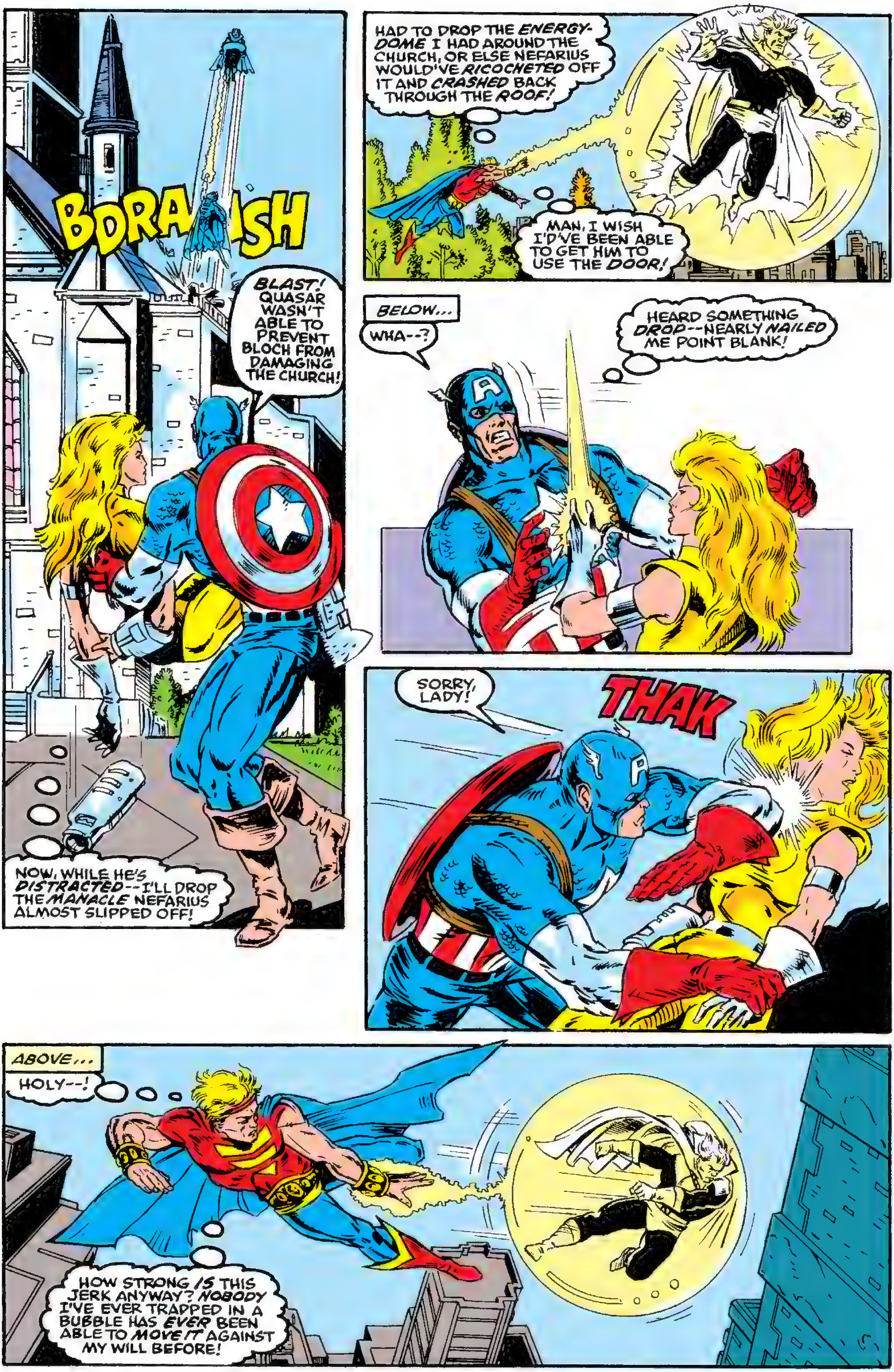

I NOW HAVE THE POWER TO DO *ANYTHING* MY HEART *DESIRES*, MY DEAR DR. SOFEN--
--AND THE *FIRST* THING MY HEART DESIRES IS TO *PAY YOU BACK* FOR ALL THE MENTAL *ANGUISH* AND YEARS OF *WASTED LIFE* YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR!
PREPARE YOURSELF, WOMAN! I'VE BEEN *FANTASIZING* ABOUT WHAT I'D DO TO YOU FOR YEARS NOW, AND I ASSURE YOU I'VE DEVELOPED A PRETTY *WILD IMAGINATION!*
Y-YOU'RE GOING TO *KILL ME*--RIGHT HERE--IN A *CHURCH?!?*
WHY *NOT*? I'M CERTAIN *FUNERAL SERVICES* ARE HELD HERE ALL THE TIME! HEH-HEH.
LOOK, LLOYD--
WHAT DID I *TELL* YOU ABOUT--?!?
SORRY! *NEFARIUS...!*
I ADMIT IT, I DID A *TERRIBLE* THING TO YOU! YOU DON'T KNOW HOW I'VE BEEN WRACKED WITH *GUILT* EVER SINCE...!
HA! YOU EXPECT ME TO *BUY* THAT?
IT'S TRUE! YOU UNDERSTAND THE--*NNGH!*--ATTRACTION OF *POWER*, I *KNOW* YOU DO. WHEN I *SAW* IT IN YOU, I KNEW --PLEASE NOT SO *HARD* --I KNEW I HAD TO HAVE IT!
IT TOTALLY BLINDED ME TO THE *MAN* WHO POSSESSED THE POWER--*YOU!* BUT HERE NOW UP CLOSE I SEE HOW MANLY YOU ARE AND--
SORRY, LADY. YOU'RE NOT TALKING YOUR WAY OUT OF *THIS!*
NOW WHAT SAY WE EXPLORE YOUR THRESHOLD OF *PAIN?* I'M A FAIR MAN. I'LL GIVE YOU A *CHOICE* AS TO WHAT *BONE* I BREAK FIRST!
LISTEN TO YOURSELF! YOU'RE *OBSESSED* WITH ME, AREN'T YOU? BUT YOU KNOW WHAT *I* THINK?
I THINK THE *OBSESSION* YOU HAVE WITH ME IS NOT HATE--BUT *LOVE!*
THINK ABOUT IT! WASN'T I ALWAYS *THERE* FOR YOU IN YOUR DARKEST *FANTASIES?* DIDN'T *I* GIVE YOU A REASON TO TAKE WHAT THE WORLD DISHED OUT AND *GO ON?* AM *I* NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING YOU THE IMMENSELY *POWERFUL MAN* YOU ARE?!?

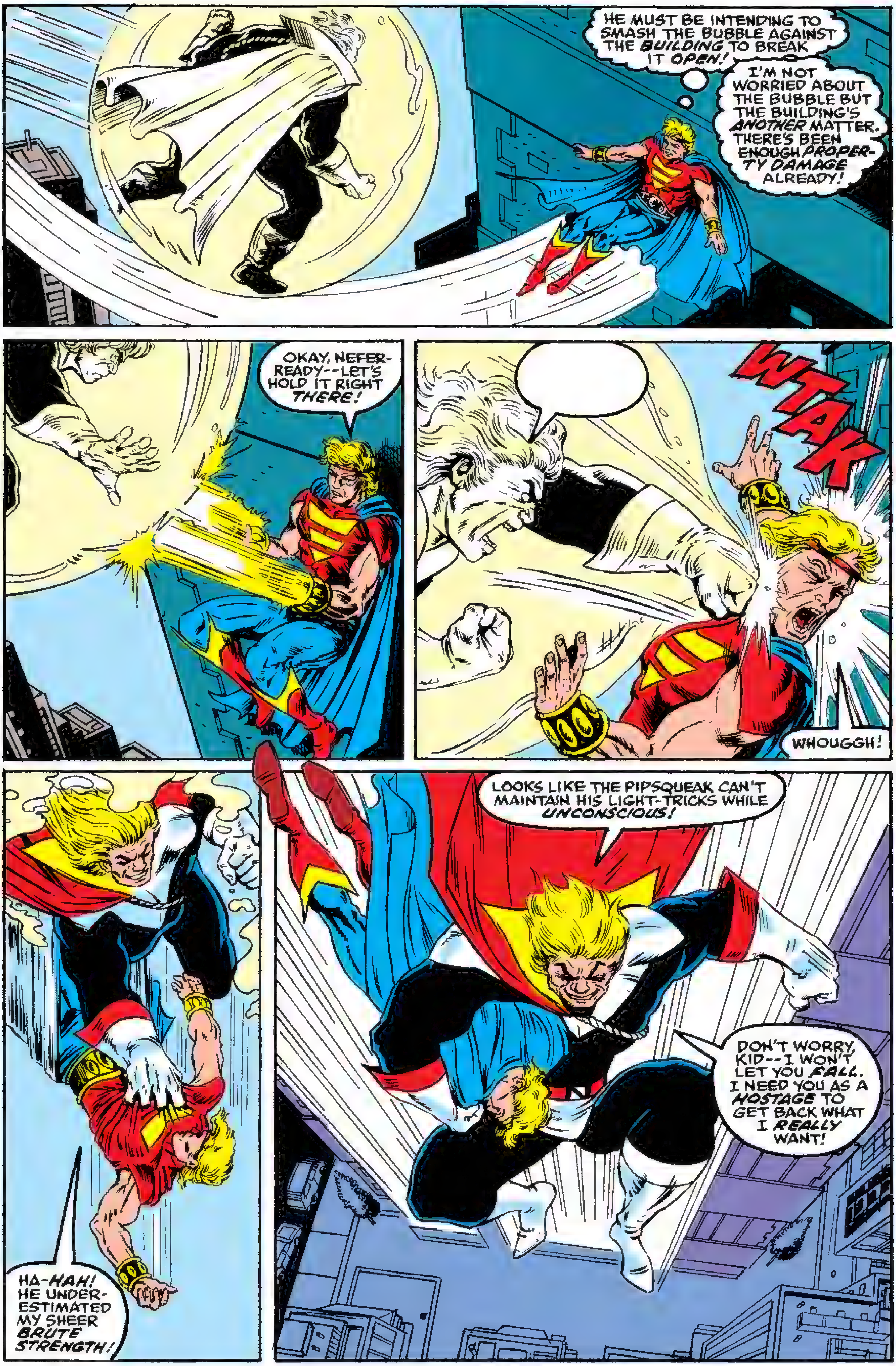

WHY *KILL* THE PERSON WHO HAS PROVIDED YOUR LIFE WITH SO MUCH MEANING? WHY *KILL* THE OBJECT OF YOUR DEEPEST FANTASIES WHEN YOU HAVE THE POWER TO *POSSESS HER*--UTTERLY?
I *WANT* YOU TO POSSESS ME, NEFARIUS! YOU DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR A MAN WHO WAS *WORTHY* OF ME AND MY POWER ...A MAN AS OVERWHELMINGLY *VIRILE* AS YOU!
DEEP DOWN, ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU REALLY WANT--TO *DOMINATE* ME, NOT KILL ME? THEN *DO IT!* LET'S *LOVE* ONE ANOTHER AS ONLY *SUPERIOR BEINGS* KNOW HOW!
I...I DON'T KNOW...
YOUR *MIND* MAY NOT KNOW...
...BUT YOUR *BODY* DOES!
ABOVE THE CITY...
STILL NOTHING?
AFRAID SO. TRICKY RASCAL MUST BE HIDING OUT SOMEWHERE, NOT USING HIS POWER!
WE'LL KEEP CIRCLING ANOTHER 15 MINUTES.
THE CHURCH...
LOVE ME, NEFARIUS, BUT NOT AS DR. KARLA SOFEN--
--BUT AS *MOONSTONE!*
COME REMOVE THESE INSIPID *ENERGY-DAMPERS*... AND LET ME MAKE YOU *FEEL* LIKE NO WOMAN HAS EVER MADE YOU FEEL *BEFORE*...!
ALL... RIGHT.

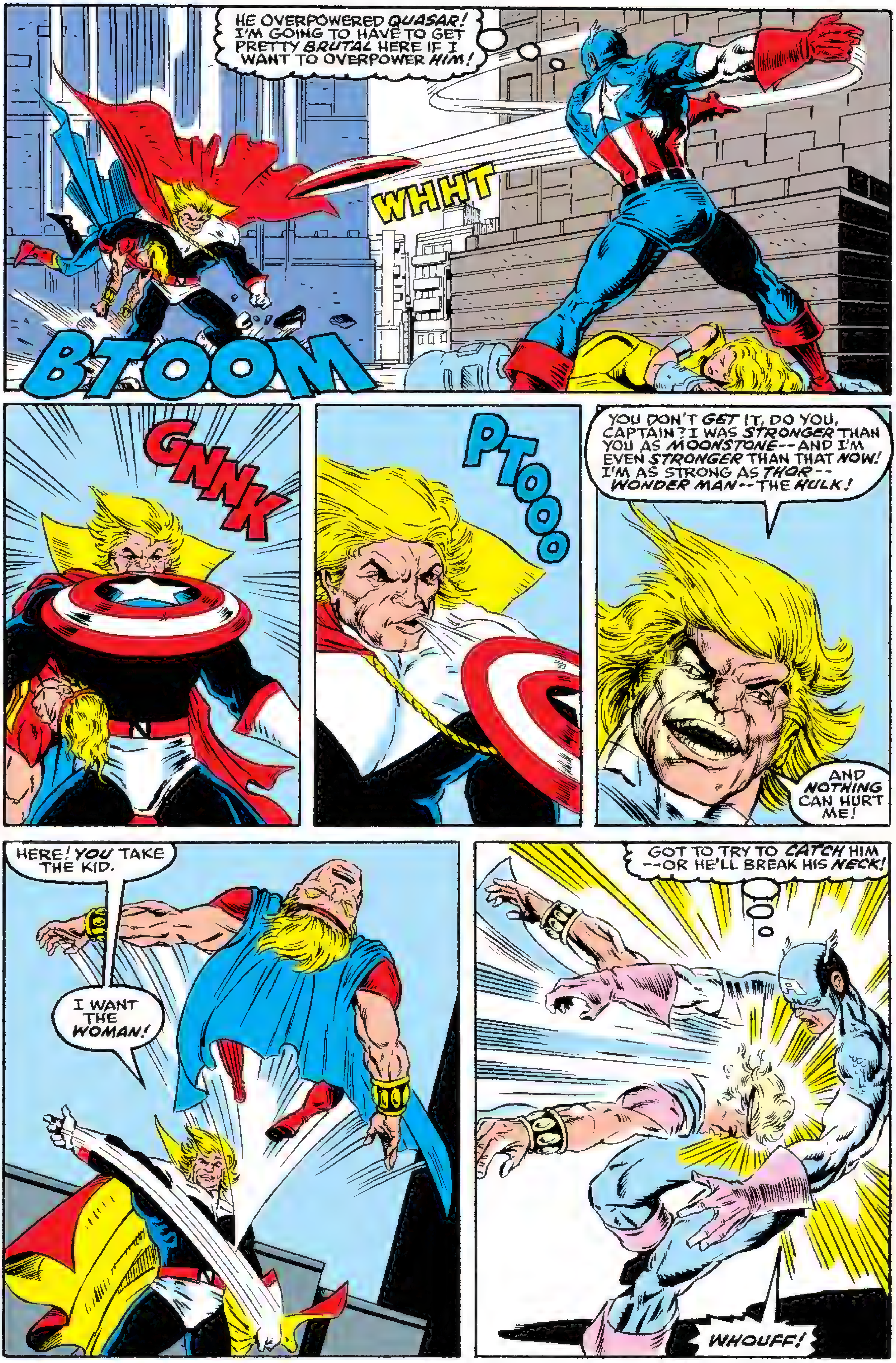

ABOVE...
HEY, CAP--I JUST GOT A STRANGE ENERGY READING. IT DIDN'T FIT THE GUY WE'RE LOOKING FOR... BUT YOU WANT TO CHECK IT OUT?
MIGHT AS WELL.
MAYBE IT WAS MOONSTONE!
IT CAME FROM RIGHT BELOW--THAT CHURCH, I THINK!
SOMETHING POWERFUL SMASHED THAT DOOR. WHY DON'T YOU SEAL OFF THE AREA TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE?
CHECK.
DONE. NOBODY'S GETTING IN OR OUT.
YOU STAY HERE, GUARD THE FRONT DOOR...
...I'M GOING TO GO AROUND BACK, FIND ANOTHER ENTRANCE.
MY JOB IS TO GET THE WOMAN TO SAFETY! YOUR JOB IS TO GET THE PERPETRATOR OUT OF THE BUILDING!
GOOD. AN OPEN WINDOW. I'D HATE TO HAVE TO BREAK AND ENTER A CHURCH!

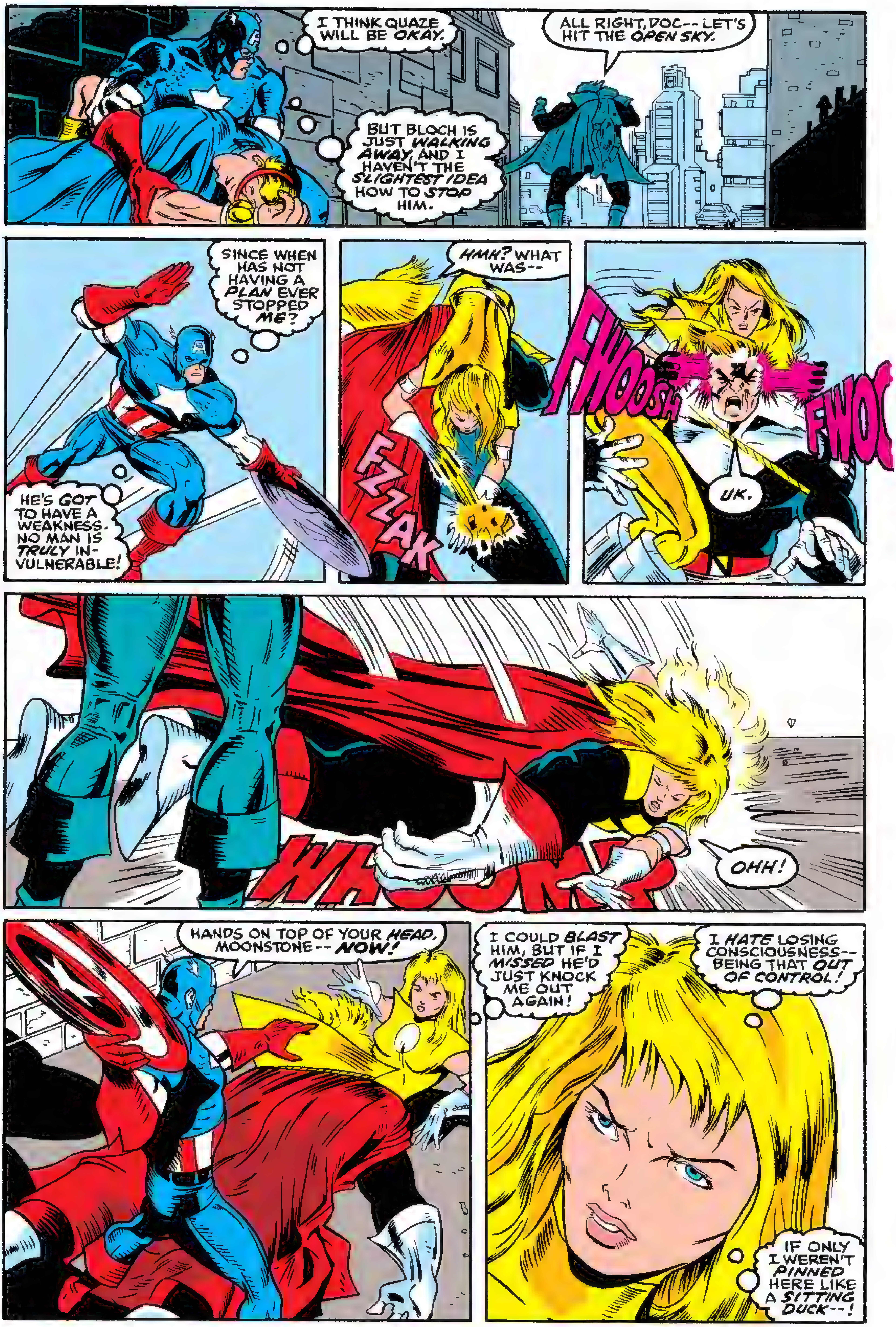

AHA! IT *IS* THE MAN WE'RE LOOKING FOR. WHAT'S THIS? LOOKS LIKE HE SET MOONSTONE FREE FOR *AMOROUS* REASONS!
PLEASE, LOVER... THE *MANACLES.* I WANT TO *CARESS* YOU SO BADLY...!
ALL RIGHT, MOONY ...I'LL *FREE* YOUR ARMS.
WHAT CAN YOUR MOON-BEAMS DO TO AN *INVULNERABLE MAN* ANYWAY? BESIDES *TICKLE,* THAT IS.
CAP TO QUAZE. PERPETRATOR IS HERE. ENTER STEALTHILY AND TAKE HIM OUT. OVER.
CHECK!
"STEALTHILY"...! I'LL TRY.
EH?
THE YOUTH--!
NEFARIUS --IT'S--
OOOF!
SORRY, MOONSTONE, THIS IS GOING TO BE A *ROUGH RESCUE!*
"NEFARIUS," HUH? HOW ORIGINAL!
YOU NEED *AIR* TO BREATHE, NEFFY?

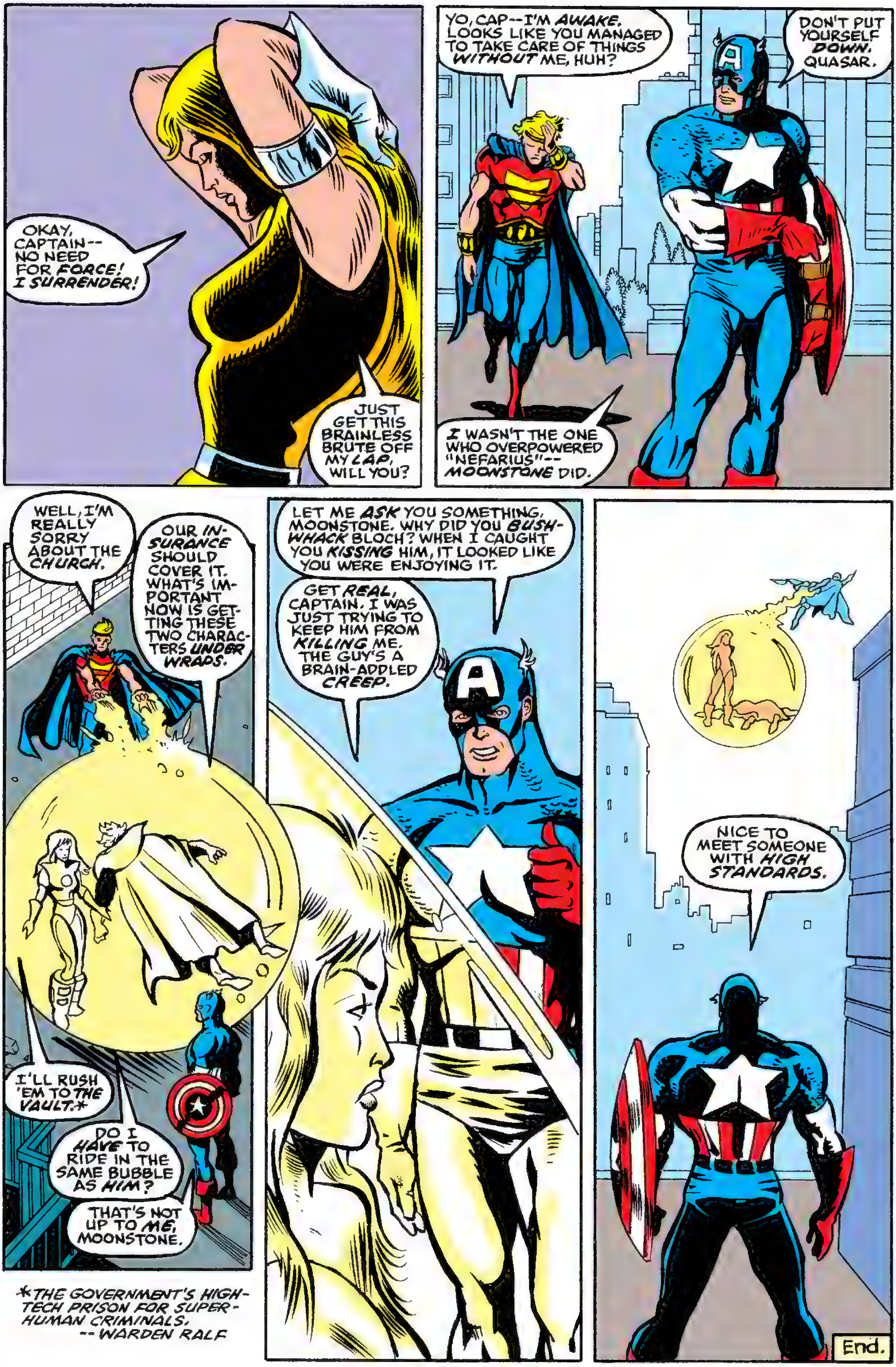

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, LADY? IS BLOCH YOUR *ACCOMPLICE* IN YOUR ESCAPE ATTEMPT OR WHAT?
NO! HE *KIDNAPPED* ME--WAS GOING TO *KILL* ME--!
DIDN'T LOOK THAT WAY WHEN *I* GOT HERE.
NO, REALLY--! OH, WHO *CARES* WHAT YOU THINK?
YOU MIGHT AS WELL *COOL IT* WITH YOUR *EYE-BLASTS*, NEFARIUS! MY *QUANTUMBANDS* ARE JUST *LEECHING* OFF THEIR ENERGY--
--AND USING IT TO REINFORCE MY ENERGYBONDS!
QUASAR'S GOT BLOCH OCCUPIED--TIME TO *EVACUATE!*
NOW WHAT'S SAY YOU AND I *LEAVE* THIS PLACE TO THE MORE *REVERENT?*
UH-OH--WHAT'S HE--?
AW, NO! HE'S BOUNDING UP TOWARD THE *CEILING*--!


BDRAASH
BLAST! QUASAR WASN'T ABLE TO PREVENT BLOCH FROM DAMAGING THE CHURCH!
NOW, WHILE HE'S DISTRACTED--I'LL DROP THE MANACLE NEFARIUS ALMOST SLIPPED OFF!
HAD TO DROP THE ENERGY-DOME I HAD AROUND THE CHURCH, OR ELSE NEFARIUS WOULD'VE RICOCHETED OFF IT AND CRASHED BACK THROUGH THE ROOF!
MAN, I WISH I'D'VE BEEN ABLE TO GET HIM TO USE THE DOOR!
BELOW...
WHA--?
HEARD SOMETHING DROP--NEARLY NAILED ME POINT BLANK!
SORRY, LADY!
THAK
ABOVE...
HOLY--!
HOW STRONG IS THIS JERK ANYWAY? NOBODY I'VE EVER TRAPPED IN A BUBBLE HAS EVER BEEN ABLE TO MOVE IT AGAINST MY WILL BEFORE!


HE MUST BE INTENDING TO SMASH THE BUBBLE AGAINST THE *BUILDING* TO BREAK IT *OPEN!*
I'M NOT WORRIED ABOUT THE BUBBLE BUT THE BUILDING'S *ANOTHER* MATTER. THERE'S BEEN ENOUGH *PROPERTY DAMAGE* ALREADY!
OKAY, NEFERREADY--LET'S HOLD IT RIGHT *THERE!*
WTAK
WHOUGGH!
HA-*HAH!* HE UNDERESTIMATED MY SHEER *BRUTE STRENGTH!*
LOOKS LIKE THE PIPSQUEAK CAN'T MAINTAIN HIS LIGHT-TRICKS WHILE *UNCONSCIOUS!*
DON'T WORRY, KID--I WON'T LET YOU *FALL*. I NEED YOU AS A *HOSTAGE* TO GET BACK WHAT I *REALLY* WANT!


HE OVERPOWERED *QUASAR!* I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GET PRETTY *BRUTAL* HERE IF I WANT TO OVERPOWER *HIM!*
WHHT
BTOOM
GNNK
PTOOO
YOU DON'T *GET* IT, DO YOU, CAPTAIN? I WAS *STRONGER* THAN YOU AS *MOONSTONE*-- AND I'M EVEN *STRONGER* THAN THAT *NOW!* I'M AS STRONG AS *THOR*-- *WONDER MAN*-- THE *HULK!*
AND *NOTHING* CAN HURT ME!
HERE! *YOU* TAKE THE KID.
I WANT THE *WOMAN!*
GOT TO TRY TO *CATCH* HIM --OR HE'LL BREAK HIS *NECK!*
WHOUFF!

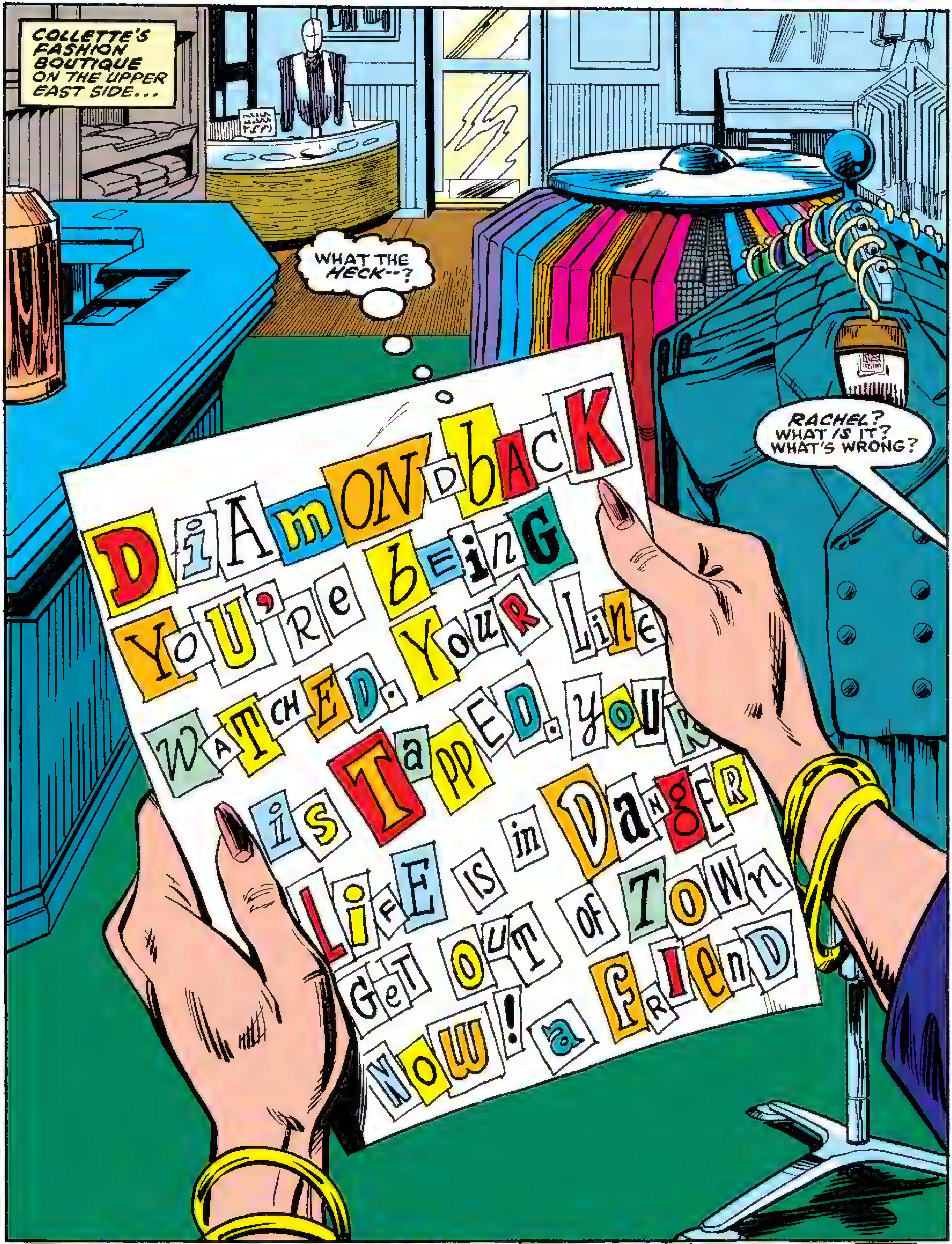

I THINK QUAZE WILL BE OKAY.
BUT BLOCH IS JUST WALKING AWAY, AND I HAVEN'T THE SLIGHTEST IDEA HOW TO STOP HIM.
ALL RIGHT, DOC-- LET'S HIT THE OPEN SKY.
SINCE WHEN HAS NOT HAVING A PLAN EVER STOPPED ME?
HE'S GOT TO HAVE A WEAKNESS. NO MAN IS TRULY IN-VULNERABLE!
HMH? WHAT WAS--
FZZAK
FWOOSH
FWOO
UK.
OHH!
HANDS ON TOP OF YOUR HEAD, MOONSTONE -- NOW!
I COULD BLAST HIM, BUT IF I MISSED HE'D JUST KNOCK ME OUT AGAIN!
I HATE LOSING CONSCIOUSNESS-- BEING THAT OUT OF CONTROL!
IF ONLY I WEREN'T PINNED HERE LIKE A SITTING DUCK--!


OKAY, CAPTAIN-- NO NEED FOR *FORCE!* *I SURRENDER!*
JUST GET THIS BRAINLESS BRUTE OFF MY *LAP,* WILL YOU?
YO, CAP--I'M *AWAKE.* LOOKS LIKE YOU MANAGED TO TAKE CARE OF THINGS *WITHOUT* ME, HUH?
DON'T PUT YOURSELF *DOWN,* QUASAR.
I WASN'T THE ONE WHO OVERPOWERED "NEFARIUS"-- *MOONSTONE* DID.
WELL, I'M REALLY SORRY ABOUT THE *CHURCH.*
OUR *INSURANCE* SHOULD COVER IT. WHAT'S IMPORTANT NOW IS GETTING THESE TWO CHARACTERS *UNDER WRAPS.*
I'LL RUSH 'EM TO *THE VAULT.**
DO I *HAVE* TO RIDE IN THE SAME BUBBLE AS *HIM?*
THAT'S NOT UP TO *ME,* MOONSTONE.
LET ME *ASK* YOU SOMETHING, MOONSTONE. WHY DID YOU *BUSHWHACK* BLOCH? WHEN I CAUGHT YOU *KISSING* HIM, IT LOOKED LIKE YOU WERE ENJOYING IT.
GET *REAL,* CAPTAIN. I WAS JUST TRYING TO KEEP HIM FROM *KILLING* ME. THE GUY'S A BRAIN-ADDLED *CREEP.*
NICE TO MEET SOMEONE WITH *HIGH STANDARDS.*
End.

**THE GOVERNMENT'S HIGH-TECH PRISON FOR SUPER-HUMAN CRIMINALS. --WARDEN RALF*

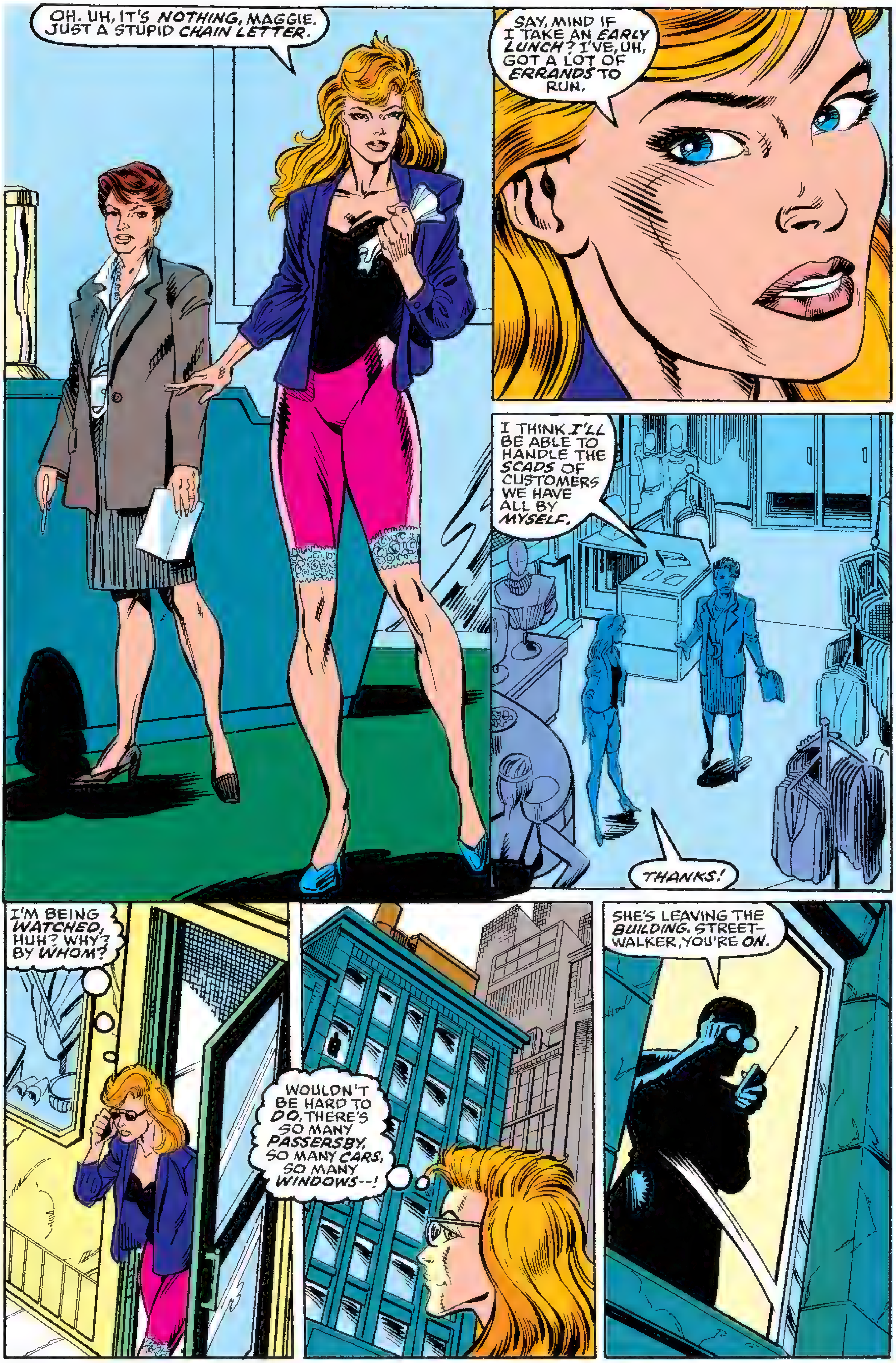
STAN LEE PRESENTS

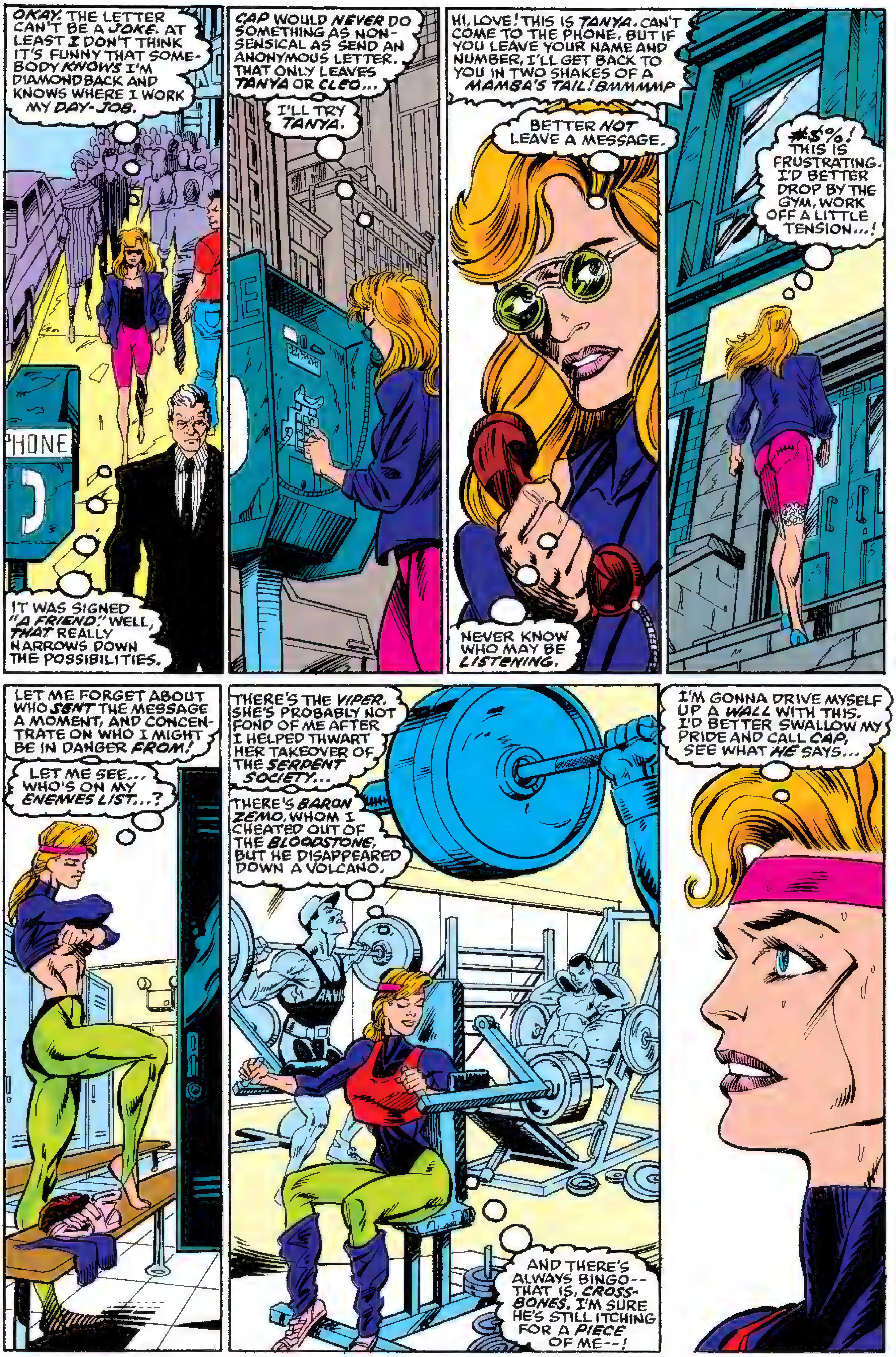
DIAMONDBACK

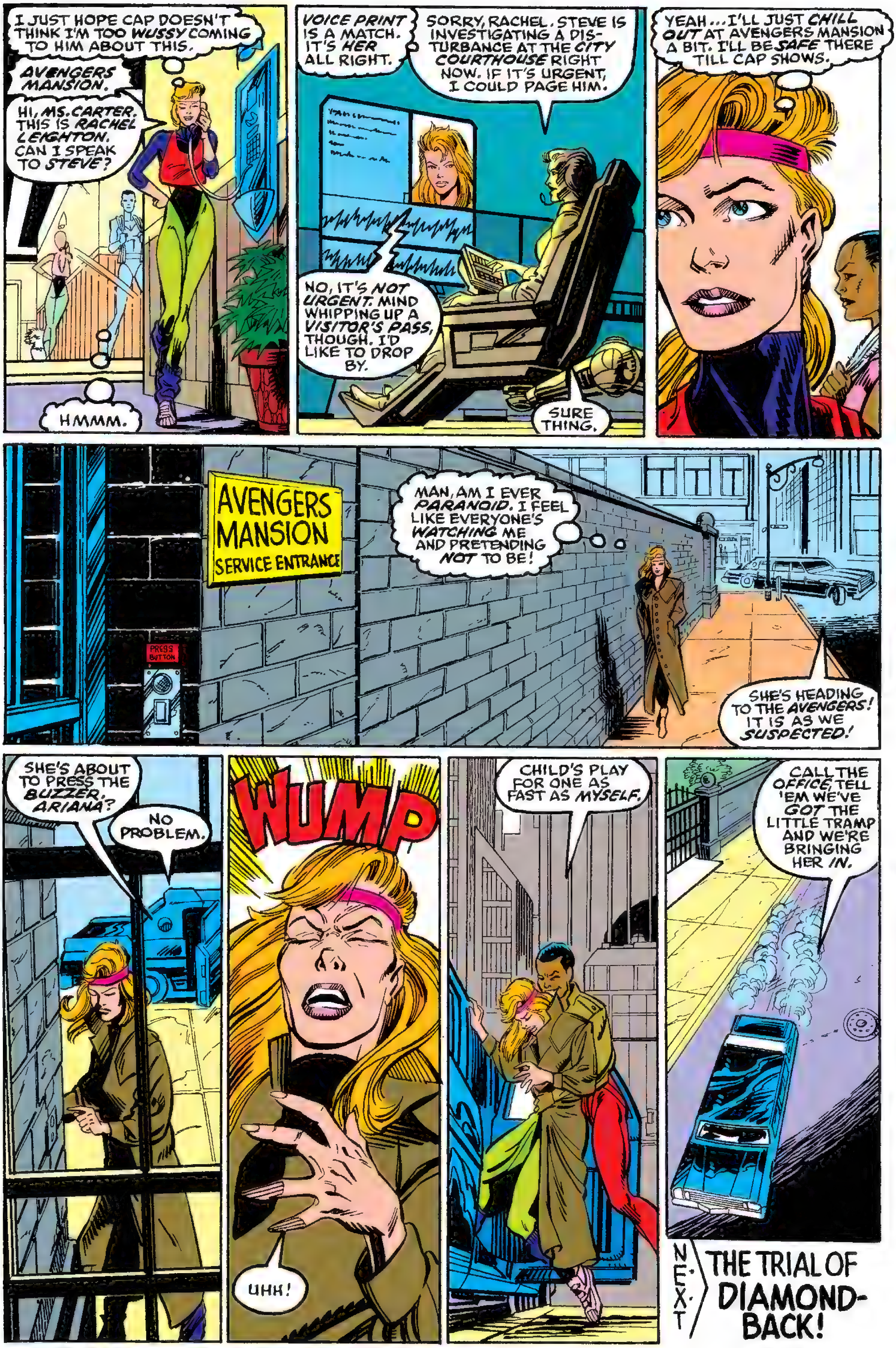

COLLETTE'S FASHION BOUTIQUE ON THE UPPER EAST SIDE...
WHAT THE HECK--?
RACHEL? WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG?
DIAMONDBACK
YOU'RE BEING WATCHED. YOUR LINE IS TAPPED. YOUR LIFE IS IN DANGER
GET OUT OF TOWN NOW!
A FRIEND

THE WARNING

by GRUENWALD - BAGLEY - PANOSIAN - ROSEN - YOMTOV


OH. UH, IT'S *NOTHING*, MAGGIE. JUST A STUPID *CHAIN LETTER*.
SAY, MIND IF I TAKE AN *EARLY LUNCH*? I'VE, UH, GOT A LOT OF *ERRANDS* TO RUN.
I THINK *I'LL* BE ABLE TO HANDLE THE *SCADS* OF CUSTOMERS WE HAVE ALL BY *MYSELF*.
THANKS!
I'M BEING *WATCHED*, HUH? WHY? BY *WHOM*?
WOULDN'T BE HARD TO *DO*, THERE'S SO MANY *PASSERSBY*, SO MANY *CARS*, SO MANY *WINDOWS*--!
SHE'S LEAVING THE *BUILDING*. STREETWALKER, YOU'RE *ON*.


OKAY. THE LETTER CAN'T BE A JOKE. AT LEAST I DON'T THINK IT'S FUNNY THAT SOMEBODY KNOWS I'M DIAMONDBACK AND KNOWS WHERE I WORK MY DAY-JOB.
PHONE
IT WAS SIGNED "A FRIEND." WELL, THAT REALLY NARROWS DOWN THE POSSIBILITIES.
CAP WOULD NEVER DO SOMETHING AS NONSENSICAL AS SEND AN ANONYMOUS LETTER. THAT ONLY LEAVES TANYA OR CLEO...
I'LL TRY TANYA.
HI, LOVE! THIS IS TANYA. CAN'T COME TO THE PHONE, BUT IF YOU LEAVE YOUR NAME AND NUMBER, I'LL GET BACK TO YOU IN TWO SHAKES OF A MAMBA'S TAIL! BMMMMP
BETTER NOT LEAVE A MESSAGE.
NEVER KNOW WHO MAY BE LISTENING.
#$%! THIS IS FRUSTRATING. I'D BETTER DROP BY THE GYM, WORK OFF A LITTLE TENSION...!
LET ME FORGET ABOUT WHO SENT THE MESSAGE A MOMENT, AND CONCENTRATE ON WHO I MIGHT BE IN DANGER FROM!
LET ME SEE... WHO'S ON MY ENEMIES LIST...?
THERE'S THE VIPER. SHE'S PROBABLY NOT FOND OF ME AFTER I HELPED THWART HER TAKEOVER OF THE SERPENT SOCIETY...
THERE'S BARON ZEMO, WHOM I CHEATED OUT OF THE BLOODSTONE, BUT HE DISAPPEARED DOWN A VOLCANO.
AND THERE'S ALWAYS BINGO--THAT IS, CROSSBONES. I'M SURE HE'S STILL ITCHING FOR A PIECE OF ME--!
I'M GONNA DRIVE MYSELF UP A WALL WITH THIS. I'D BETTER SWALLOW MY PRIDE AND CALL CAP, SEE WHAT HE SAYS...


I JUST HOPE CAP DOESN'T THINK I'M TOO *WUSSY* COMING TO HIM ABOUT THIS.
AVENGERS MANSION.
HI, *MS. CARTER*. THIS IS *RACHEL LEIGHTON.* CAN I SPEAK TO *STEVE*?
HMMM.
VOICE PRINT IS A MATCH. IT'S *HER* ALL RIGHT.
SORRY, RACHEL. STEVE IS INVESTIGATING A DISTURBANCE AT THE *CITY COURTHOUSE* RIGHT NOW. IF IT'S URGENT, I COULD PAGE HIM.
NO, IT'S *NOT URGENT.* MIND WHIPPING UP A *VISITOR'S PASS,* THOUGH. I'D LIKE TO DROP BY.
SURE THING.
YEAH... I'LL JUST *CHILL OUT* AT AVENGERS MANSION A BIT. I'LL BE *SAFE* THERE TILL CAP SHOWS.
AVENGERS MANSION SERVICE ENTRANCE
PRESS BUTTON
MAN, AM I EVER *PARANOID.* I FEEL LIKE EVERYONE'S *WATCHING* ME AND PRETENDING *NOT* TO BE!
SHE'S HEADING TO THE *AVENGERS!* IT IS AS WE *SUSPECTED!*
SHE'S ABOUT TO PRESS THE *BUZZER, ARIANA?*
NO PROBLEM.
WUMP
UHH!
CHILD'S PLAY FOR ONE AS FAST AS *MYSELF.*
CALL THE *OFFICE,* TELL 'EM WE'VE *GOT* THE LITTLE TRAMP AND WE'RE BRINGING HER *IN.*
NEXT: THE TRIAL OF DIAMONDBACK!

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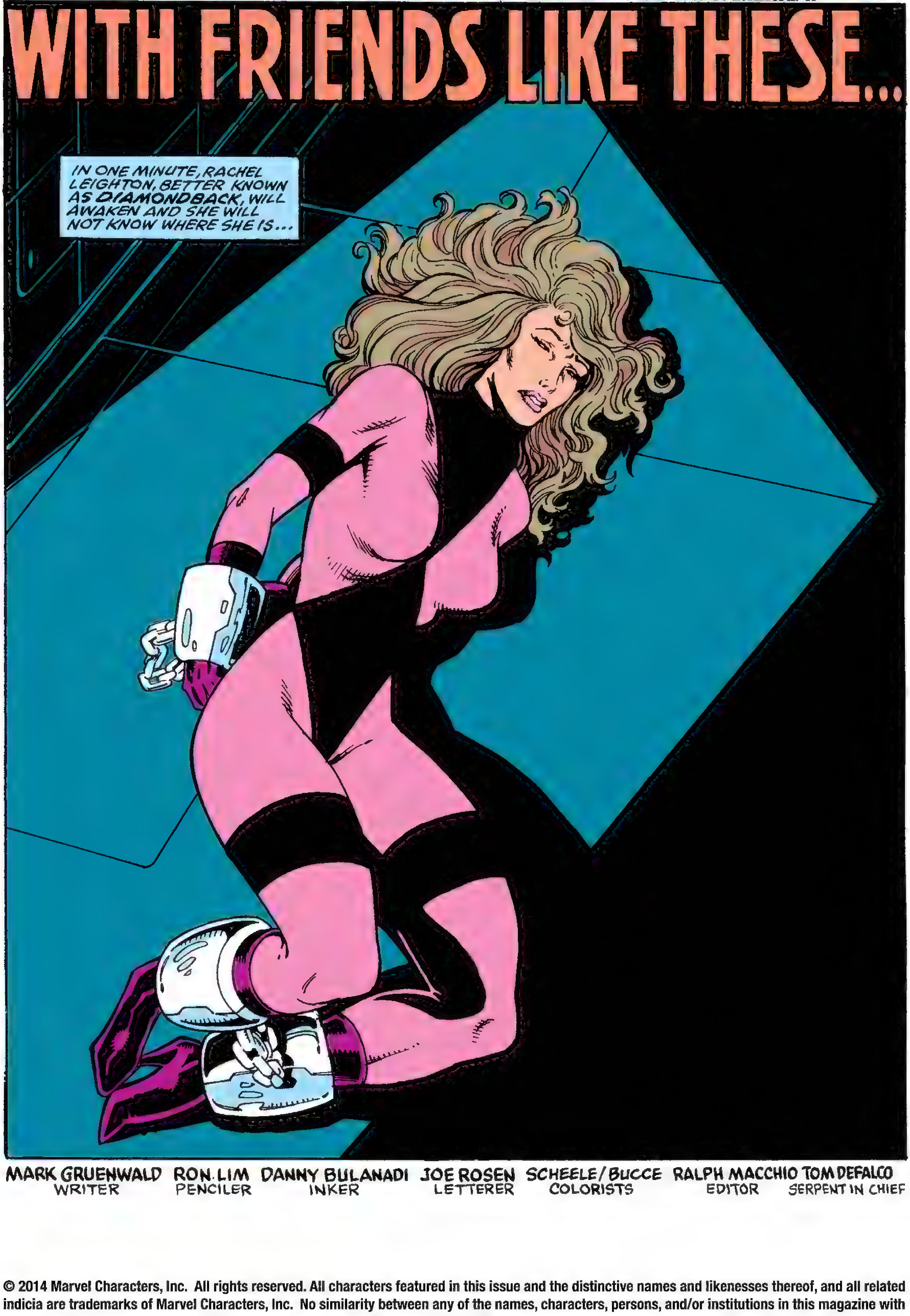
THE VERDICT IS DEATH!
RON LIM '90 + DAN BULANADI

STEVE ROGERS . . . BORN IN THE U.S.A., RAISED TO CHERISH THE IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY, ENDOWED WITH A SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE, AND DRIVEN TO BE THE MOST CAPABLE COMBATANT IN THE WORLD. NOW AS BOTH LONE CRUSADER AND LEADER OF THE RENOWNED AVENGERS, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM! STAN LEE PRESENTS . . . CAPTAIN AMERICA!

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE...


IN ONE MINUTE, RACHEL LEIGHTON, BETTER KNOWN AS DIAMONDBACK, WILL AWAKEN AND SHE WILL NOT KNOW WHERE SHE IS...

MARK GRUENWALD WRITER
RON LIM PENCILER
DANNY BULANADI INKER
JOE ROSEN LETTERER
SCHEELE/BUCCE COLORISTS
RALPH MACCHIO EDITOR
TOM DEFALCO SERPENT IN CHIEF

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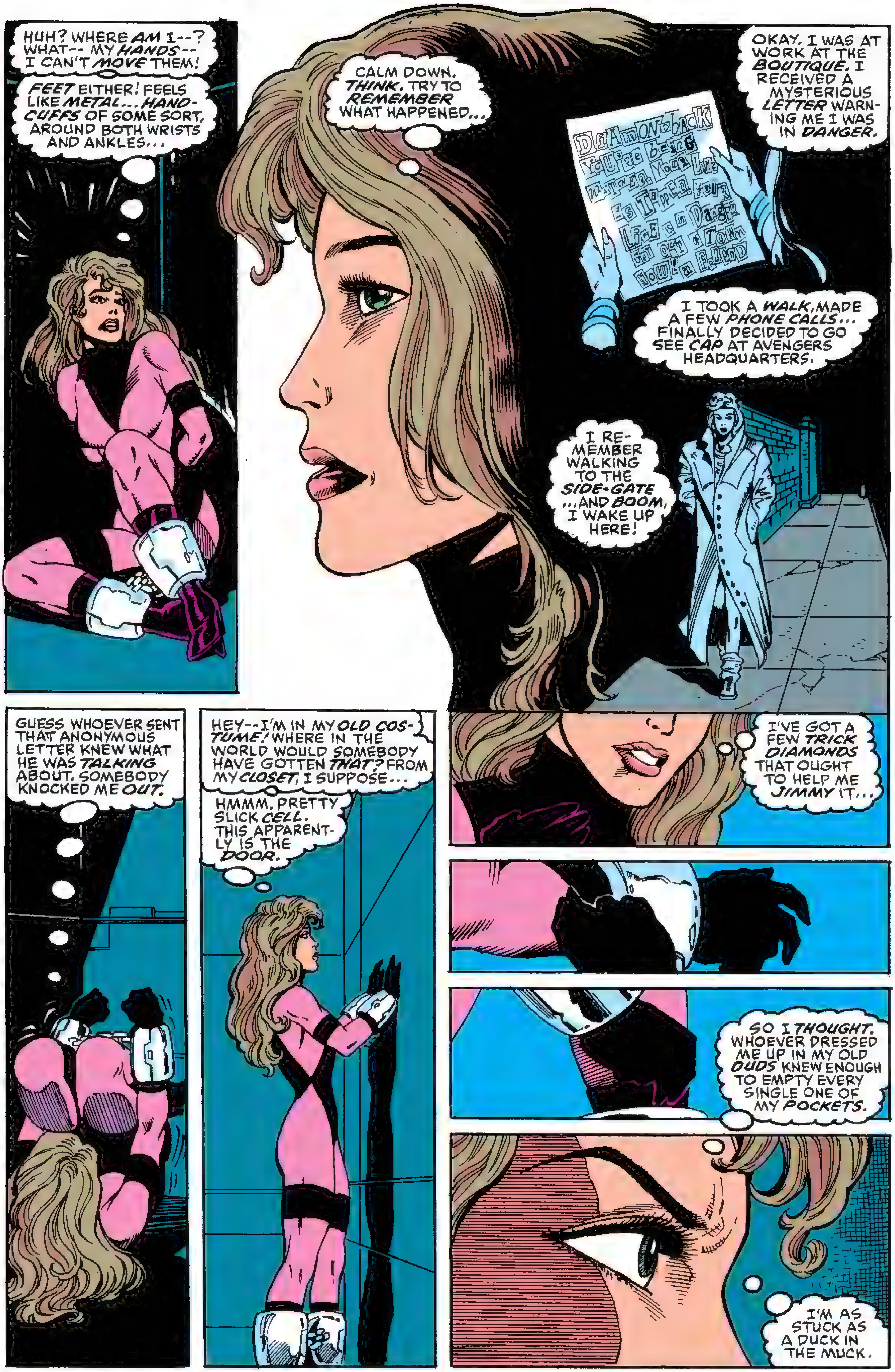
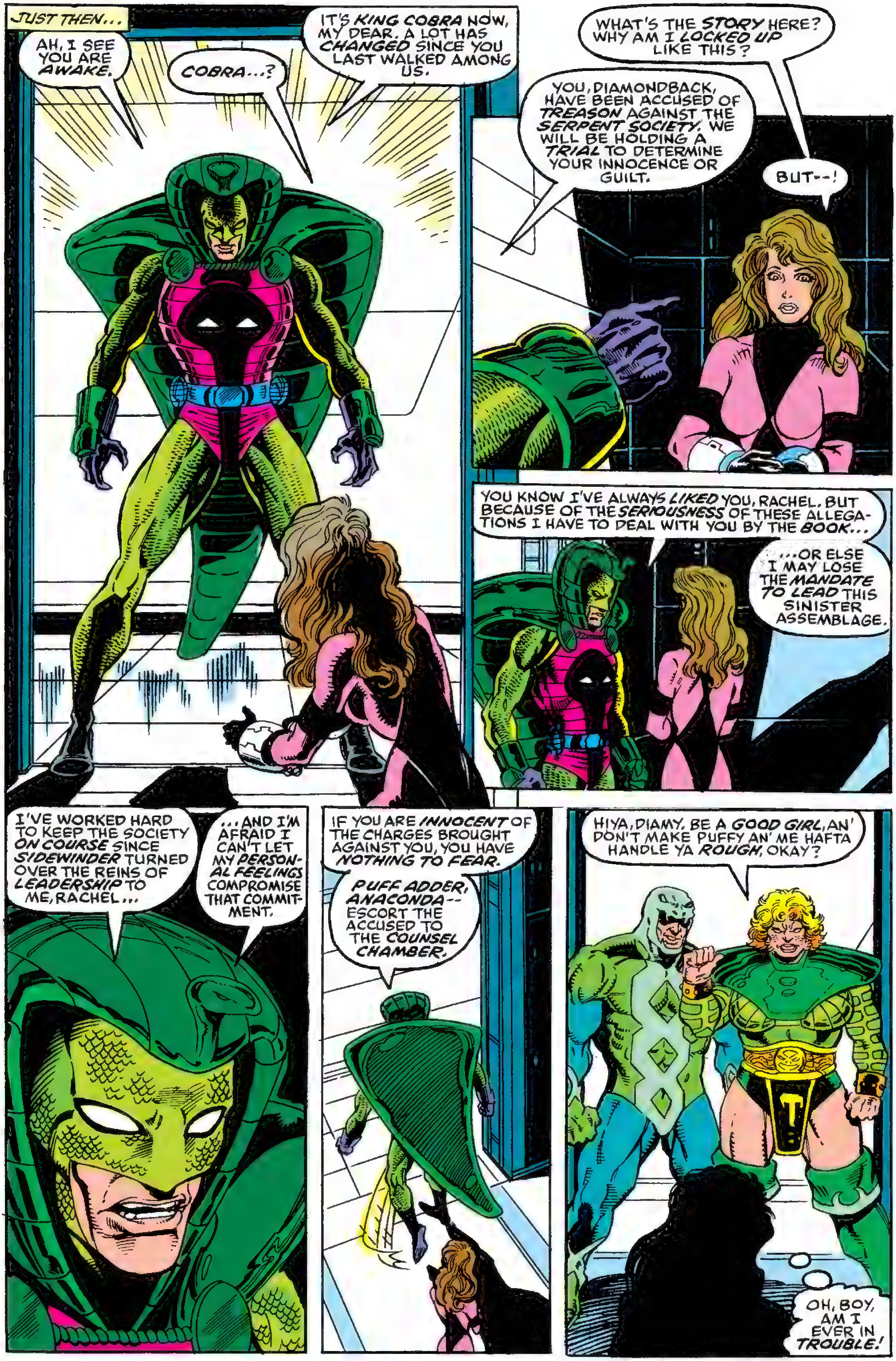
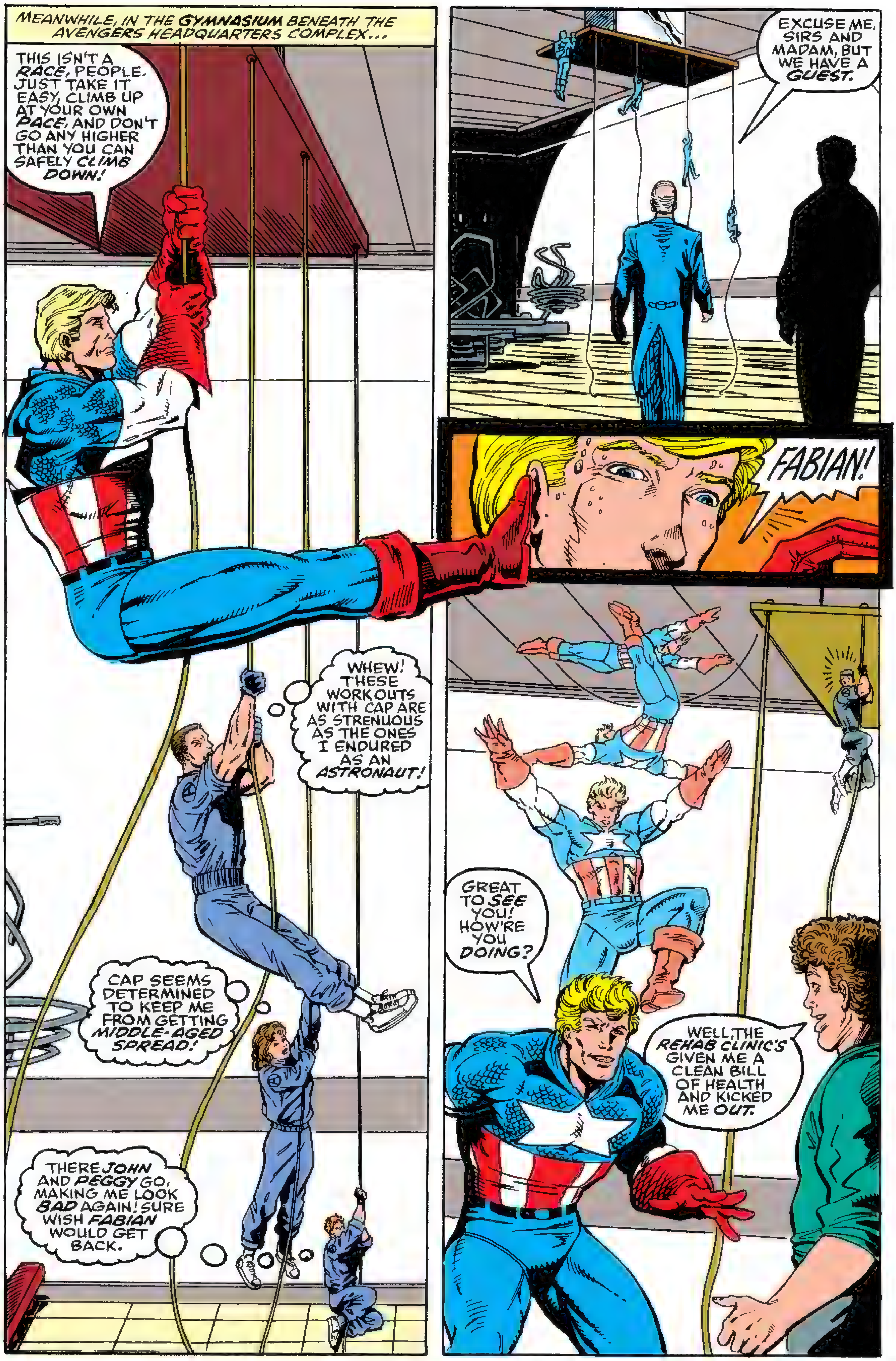
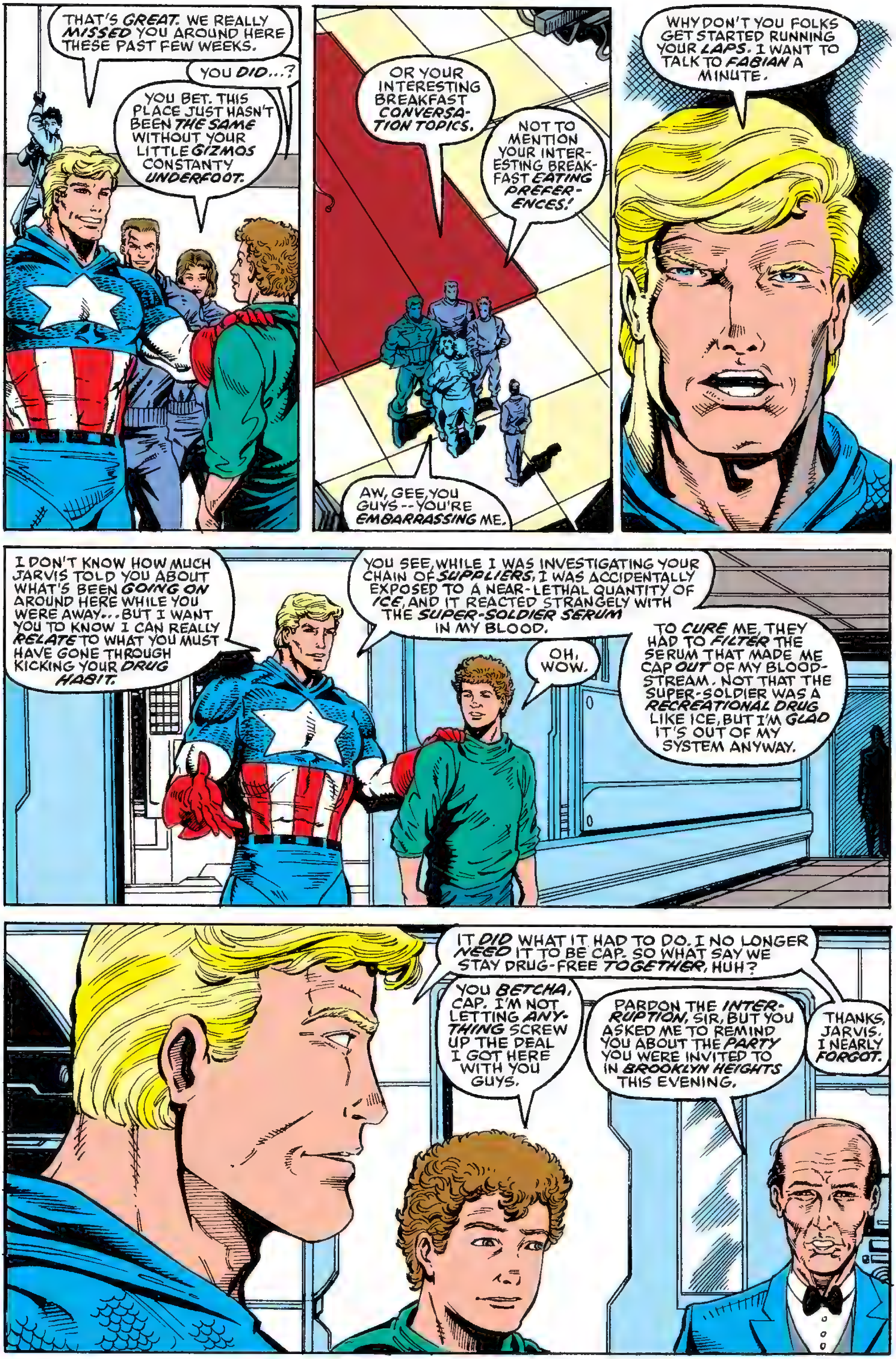
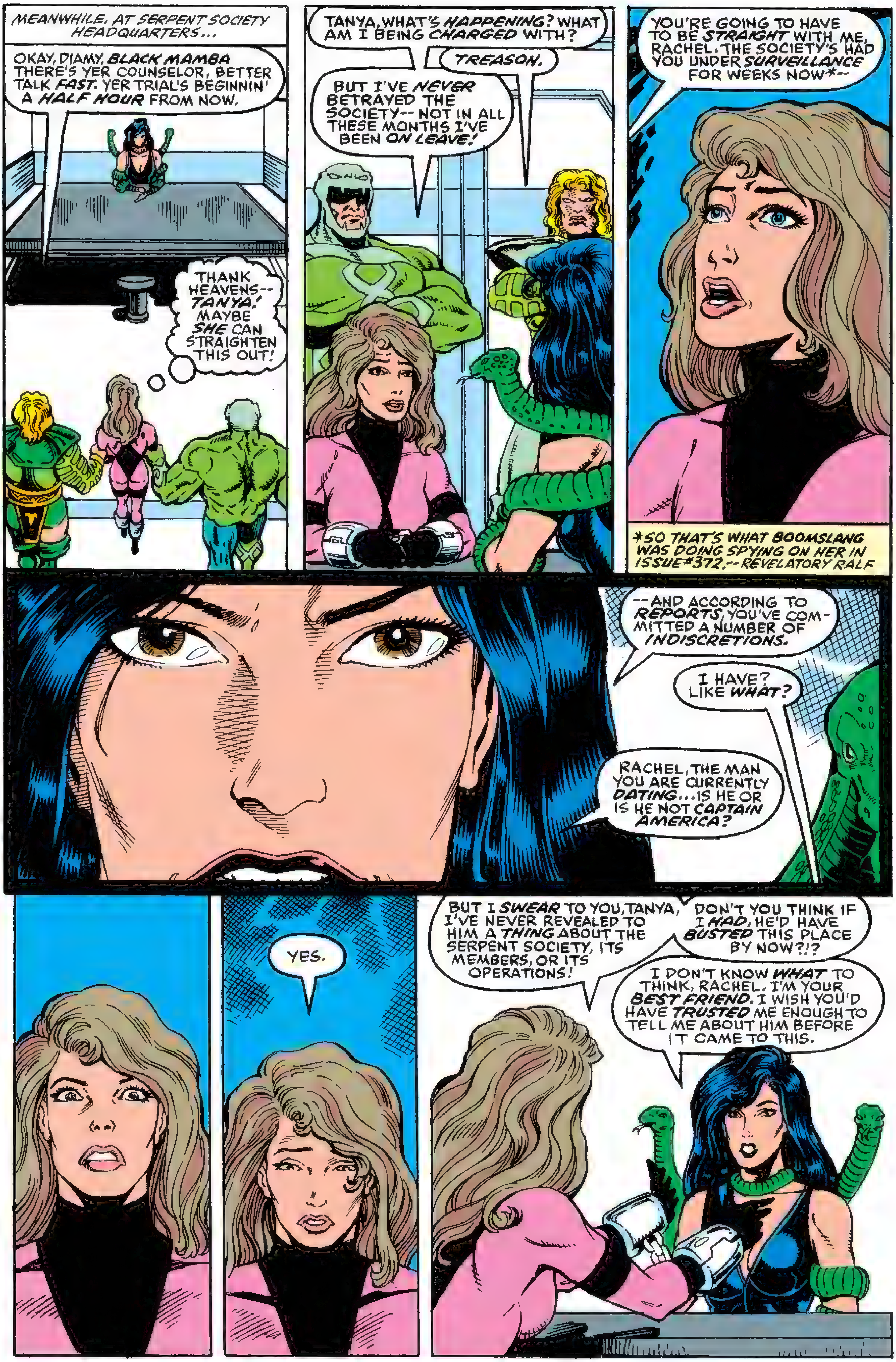
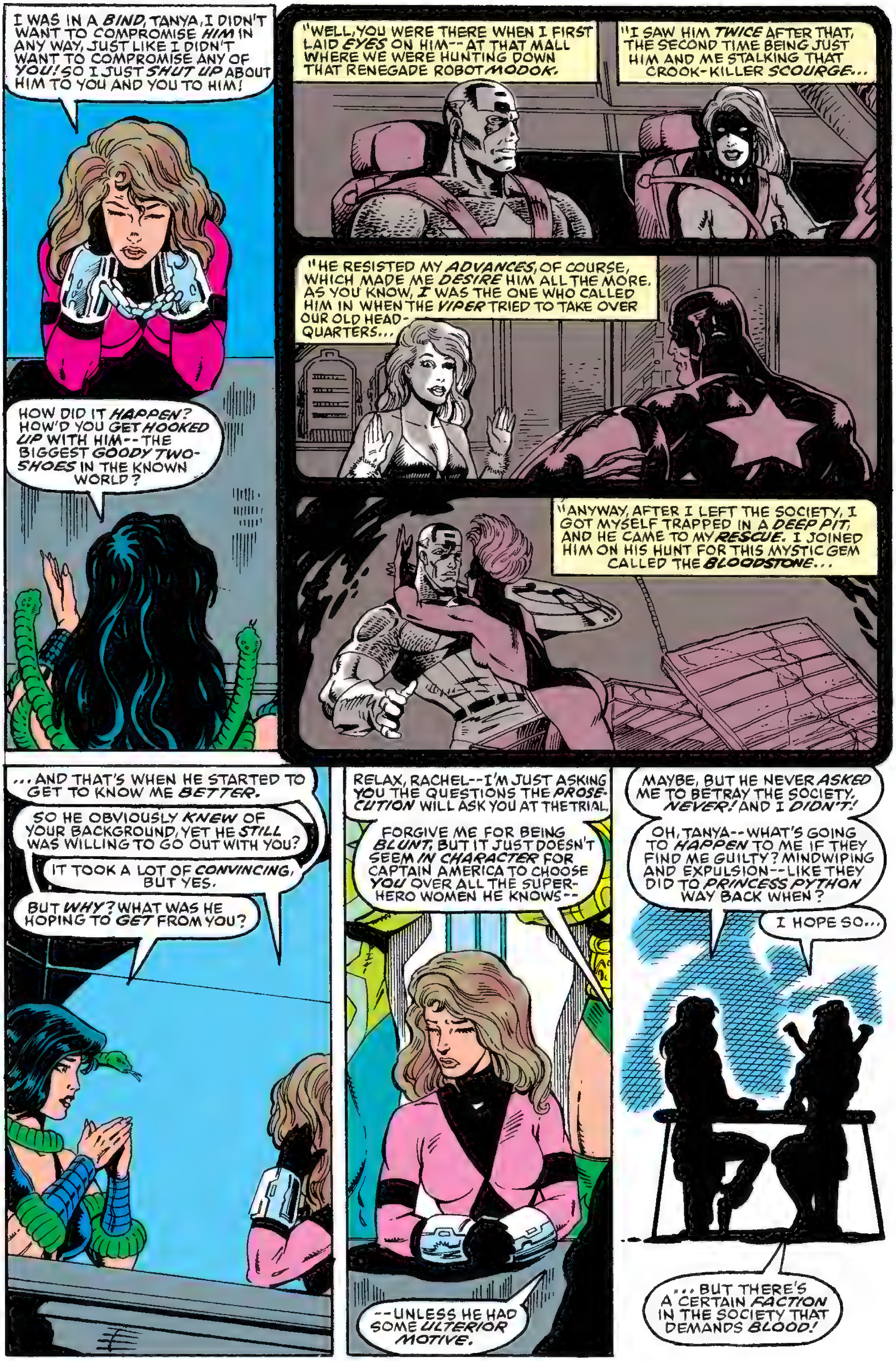

HUH? WHERE *AM* I--? WHAT-- MY *HANDS*-- I CAN'T *MOVE* THEM!
FEET EITHER! FEELS LIKE *METAL*... *HANDCUFFS* OF SOME SORT, AROUND BOTH WRISTS AND ANKLES...
CALM DOWN. *THINK*. TRY TO *REMEMBER* WHAT HAPPENED...
OKAY. I WAS AT WORK AT THE *BOUTIQUE*. I RECEIVED A MYSTERIOUS *LETTER* WARNING ME I WAS IN *DANGER*.
DiAmONDbACK YOU'RE being WATCHED. YOUR LINE IS TAPPED. YOUR LIFE IS in DANGER GET OUT of TOWN NOW! a FRIEND
I TOOK A *WALK*, MADE A FEW *PHONE CALLS*... FINALLY DECIDED TO GO SEE *CAP* AT AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS.
I REMEMBER WALKING TO THE *SIDE-GATE* ...AND *BOOM*, I WAKE UP HERE!
GUESS WHOEVER SENT THAT ANONYMOUS LETTER KNEW WHAT HE WAS *TALKING* ABOUT. SOMEBODY KNOCKED ME *OUT*.
HEY--I'M IN MY *OLD COSTUME!* WHERE IN THE WORLD WOULD SOMEBODY HAVE GOTTEN *THAT*? FROM MY *CLOSET*, I SUPPOSE...
HMMM. PRETTY SLICK *CELL*. THIS APPARENTLY IS THE *DOOR*.
I'VE GOT A FEW *TRICK DIAMONDS* THAT OUGHT TO HELP ME *JIMMY* IT...
SO I *THOUGHT*. WHOEVER DRESSED ME UP IN MY OLD *DUDS* KNEW ENOUGH TO EMPTY EVERY SINGLE ONE OF MY *POCKETS*.
I'M AS STUCK AS A DUCK IN THE MUCK.

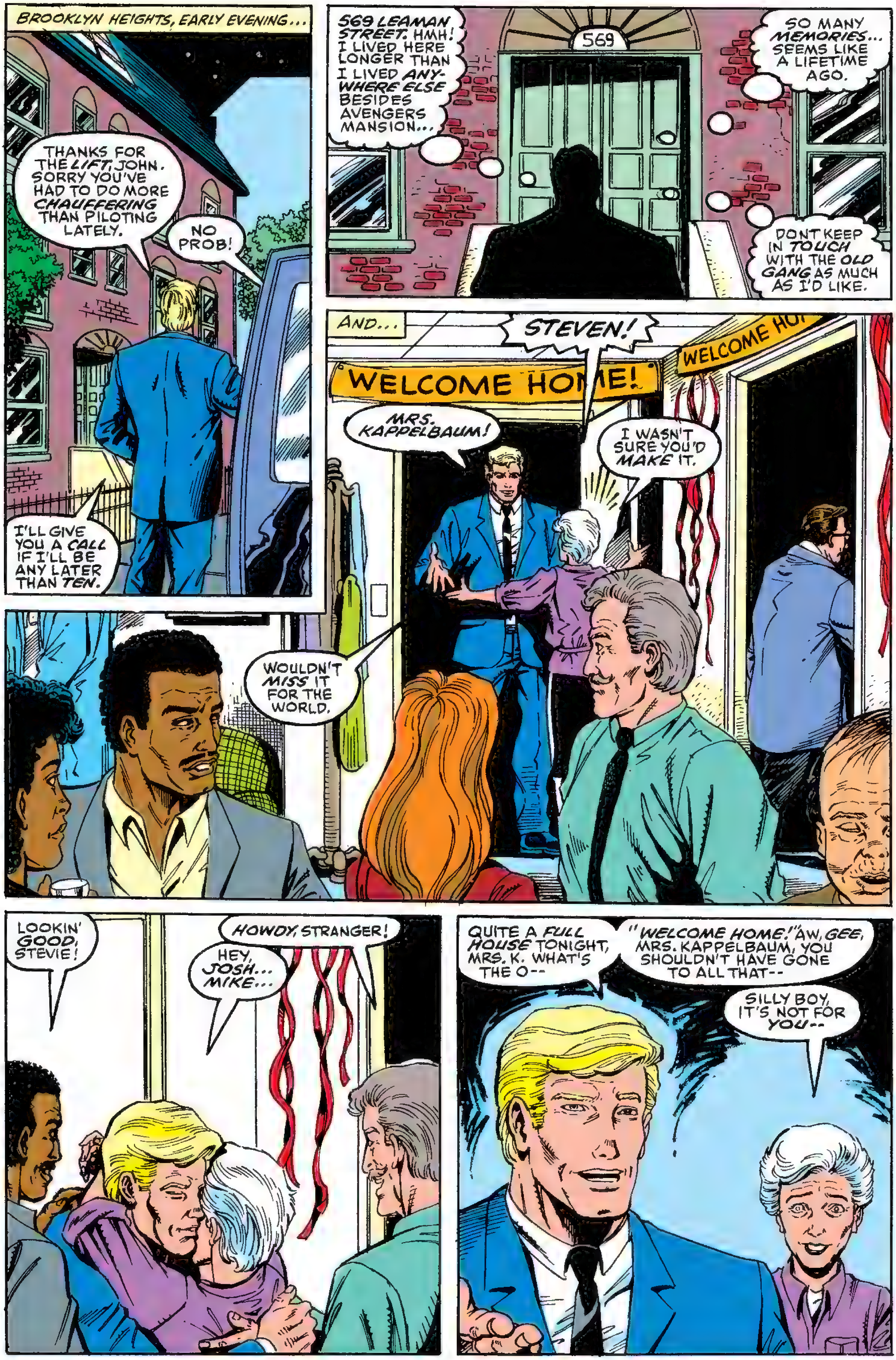

JUST THEN...
AH, I SEE YOU ARE AWAKE.
COBRA...?
IT'S KING COBRA NOW, MY DEAR. A LOT HAS CHANGED SINCE YOU LAST WALKED AMONG US.
WHAT'S THE STORY HERE? WHY AM I LOCKED UP LIKE THIS?
YOU, DIAMONDBACK, HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OF TREASON AGAINST THE SERPENT SOCIETY. WE WILL BE HOLDING A TRIAL TO DETERMINE YOUR INNOCENCE OR GUILT.
BUT--!
YOU KNOW I'VE ALWAYS LIKED YOU, RACHEL. BUT BECAUSE OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THESE ALLEGATIONS I HAVE TO DEAL WITH YOU BY THE BOOK...
...OR ELSE I MAY LOSE THE MANDATE TO LEAD THIS SINISTER ASSEMBLAGE.
I'VE WORKED HARD TO KEEP THE SOCIETY ON COURSE SINCE SIDEWINDER TURNED OVER THE REINS OF LEADERSHIP TO ME, RACHEL...
...AND I'M AFRAID I CAN'T LET MY PERSONAL FEELINGS COMPROMISE THAT COMMITMENT.
IF YOU ARE INNOCENT OF THE CHARGES BROUGHT AGAINST YOU, YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR.
PUFF ADDER, ANACONDA-- ESCORT THE ACCUSED TO THE COUNSEL CHAMBER.
HIYA, DIAMY. BE A GOOD GIRL, AN' DON'T MAKE PUFFY AN' ME HAFTA HANDLE YA ROUGH, OKAY?
OH, BOY, AM I EVER IN TROUBLE!

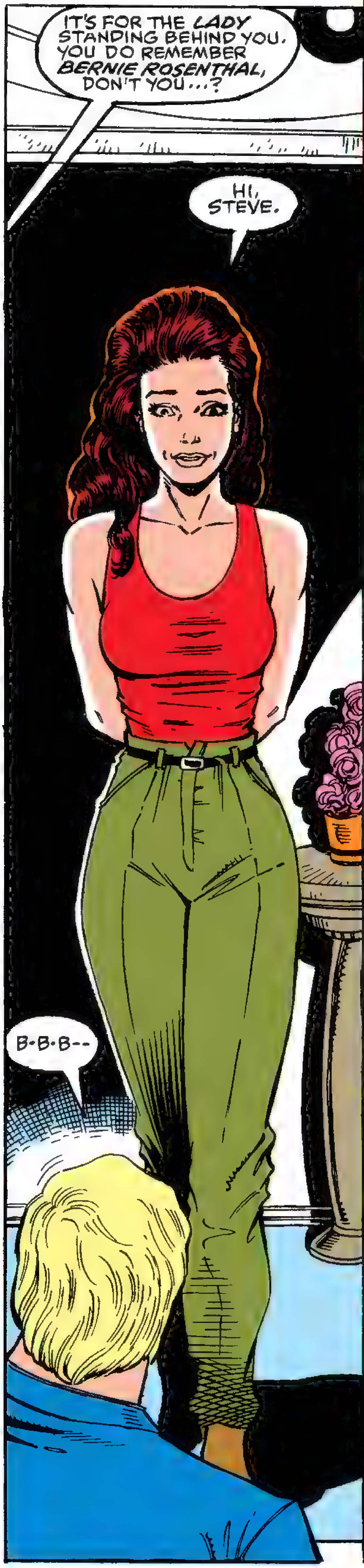

MEANWHILE, IN THE GYMNASIUM BENEATH THE AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS COMPLEX...
THIS ISN'T A RACE, PEOPLE. JUST TAKE IT EASY, CLIMB UP AT YOUR OWN PACE, AND DON'T GO ANY HIGHER THAN YOU CAN SAFELY CLIMB DOWN!
WHEW! THESE WORKOUTS WITH CAP ARE AS STRENUOUS AS THE ONES I ENDURED AS AN ASTRONAUT!
CAP SEEMS DETERMINED TO KEEP ME FROM GETTING MIDDLE-AGED SPREAD!
THERE JOHN AND PEGGY GO, MAKING ME LOOK BAD AGAIN! SURE WISH FABIAN WOULD GET BACK.
EXCUSE ME, SIRS AND MADAM, BUT WE HAVE A GUEST.
FABIAN!
GREAT TO SEE YOU! HOW'RE YOU DOING?
WELL, THE REHAB CLINIC'S GIVEN ME A CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH AND KICKED ME OUT.

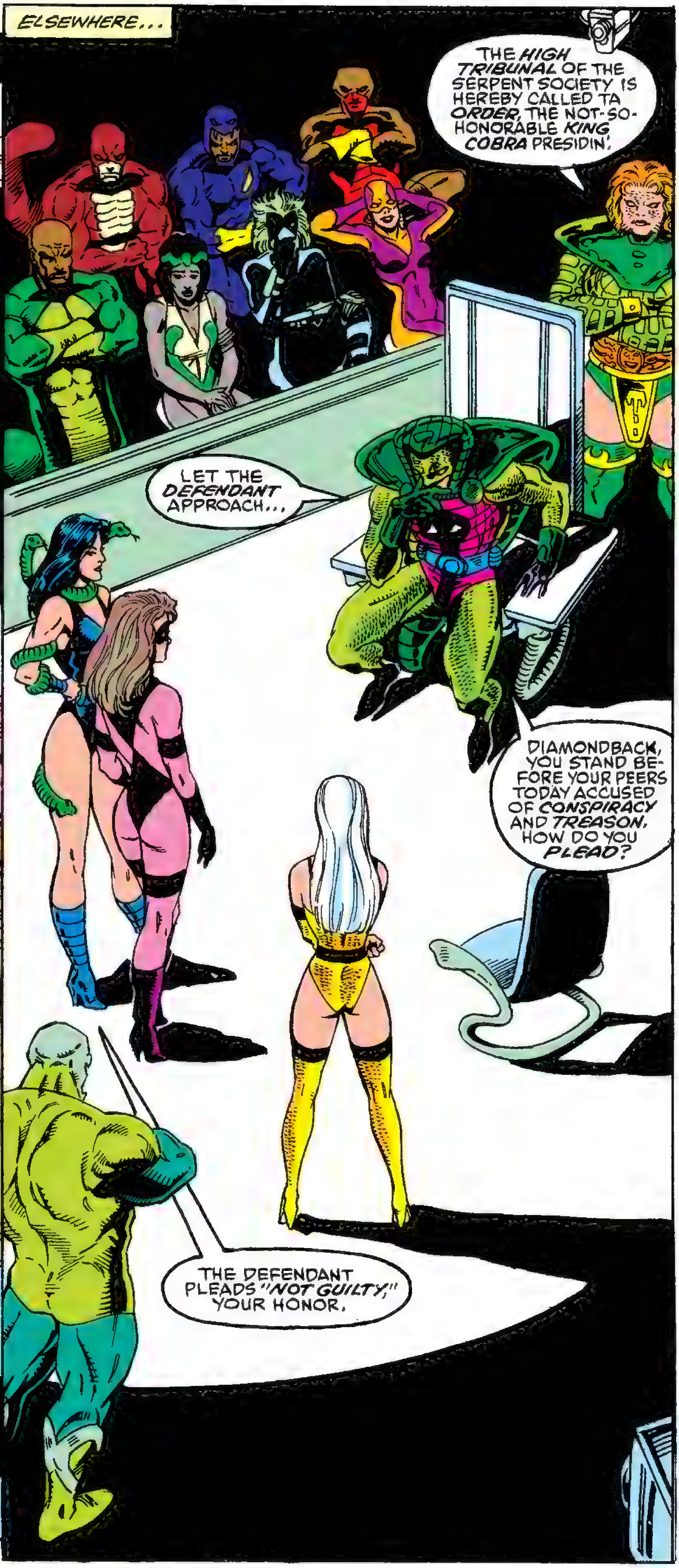

THAT'S *GREAT.* WE REALLY *MISSED* YOU AROUND HERE THESE PAST FEW WEEKS.
YOU *DID*...?
YOU BET. THIS PLACE JUST HASN'T BEEN *THE SAME* WITHOUT YOUR LITTLE *GIZMOS* CONSTANTY *UNDERFOOT.*
OR YOUR INTERESTING BREAKFAST *CONVERSATION TOPICS.*
NOT TO MENTION YOUR INTERESTING BREAKFAST *EATING PREFERENCES!*
AW, GEE, YOU GUYS -- YOU'RE *EMBARRASSING* ME.
WHY DON'T YOU FOLKS GET STARTED RUNNING YOUR *LAPS.* I WANT TO TALK TO *FABIAN* A MINUTE.
I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH JARVIS TOLD YOU ABOUT WHAT'S BEEN *GOING ON* AROUND HERE WHILE YOU WERE AWAY... BUT I WANT YOU TO KNOW I CAN REALLY *RELATE* TO WHAT YOU MUST HAVE GONE THROUGH KICKING YOUR *DRUG HABIT.*
YOU SEE, WHILE I WAS INVESTIGATING YOUR CHAIN OF *SUPPLIERS,* I WAS ACCIDENTALLY EXPOSED TO A NEAR-LETHAL QUANTITY OF *ICE,* AND IT REACTED STRANGELY WITH THE *SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM* IN MY BLOOD.
OH, WOW.
TO *CURE* ME, THEY HAD TO *FILTER* THE SERUM THAT MADE ME CAP *OUT* OF MY BLOODSTREAM. NOT THAT THE SUPER-SOLDIER WAS A *RECREATIONAL DRUG* LIKE ICE, BUT I'M *GLAD* IT'S OUT OF MY SYSTEM ANYWAY.
IT *DID* WHAT IT HAD TO DO. I NO LONGER *NEED* IT TO BE CAP. SO WHAT SAY WE STAY DRUG-FREE *TOGETHER,* HUH?
YOU *BETCHA,* CAP. I'M NOT LETTING *ANYTHING* SCREW UP THE DEAL I GOT HERE WITH YOU GUYS.
PARDON THE *INTERRUPTION,* SIR, BUT YOU ASKED ME TO REMIND YOU ABOUT THE *PARTY* YOU WERE INVITED TO IN *BROOKLYN HEIGHTS* THIS EVENING.
THANKS, JARVIS. I NEARLY *FORGOT.*

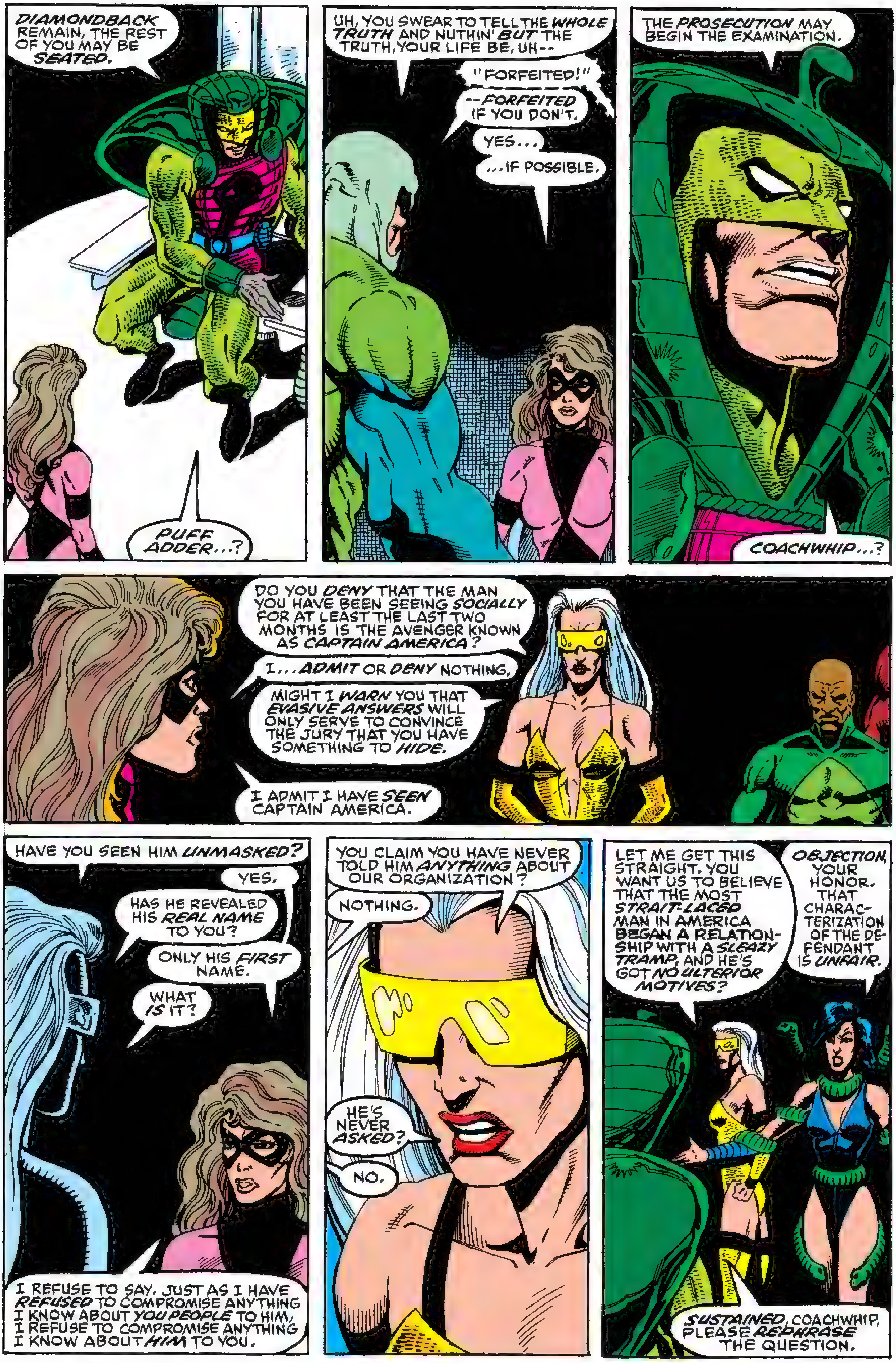

MEANWHILE, AT SERPENT SOCIETY HEADQUARTERS...
OKAY, DIAMY, BLACK MAMBA THERE'S YER COUNSELOR. BETTER TALK FAST. YER TRIAL'S BEGINNIN' A HALF HOUR FROM NOW.
THANK HEAVENS-- TANYA! MAYBE SHE CAN STRAIGHTEN THIS OUT!
TANYA, WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHAT AM I BEING CHARGED WITH?
TREASON.
BUT I'VE NEVER BETRAYED THE SOCIETY-- NOT IN ALL THESE MONTHS I'VE BEEN ON LEAVE!
YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO BE STRAIGHT WITH ME, RACHEL. THE SOCIETY'S HAD YOU UNDER SURVEILLANCE FOR WEEKS NOW*--
*SO THAT'S WHAT BOOMSLANG WAS DOING SPYING ON HER IN ISSUE #372.--REVELATORY RALF
--AND ACCORDING TO REPORTS, YOU'VE COMMITTED A NUMBER OF INDISCRETIONS.
I HAVE? LIKE WHAT?
RACHEL, THE MAN YOU ARE CURRENTLY DATING... IS HE OR IS HE NOT CAPTAIN AMERICA?
YES.
BUT I SWEAR TO YOU, TANYA, I'VE NEVER REVEALED TO HIM A THING ABOUT THE SERPENT SOCIETY, ITS MEMBERS, OR ITS OPERATIONS!
DON'T YOU THINK IF I HAD, HE'D HAVE BUSTED THIS PLACE BY NOW?!?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK, RACHEL. I'M YOUR BEST FRIEND. I WISH YOU'D HAVE TRUSTED ME ENOUGH TO TELL ME ABOUT HIM BEFORE IT CAME TO THIS.

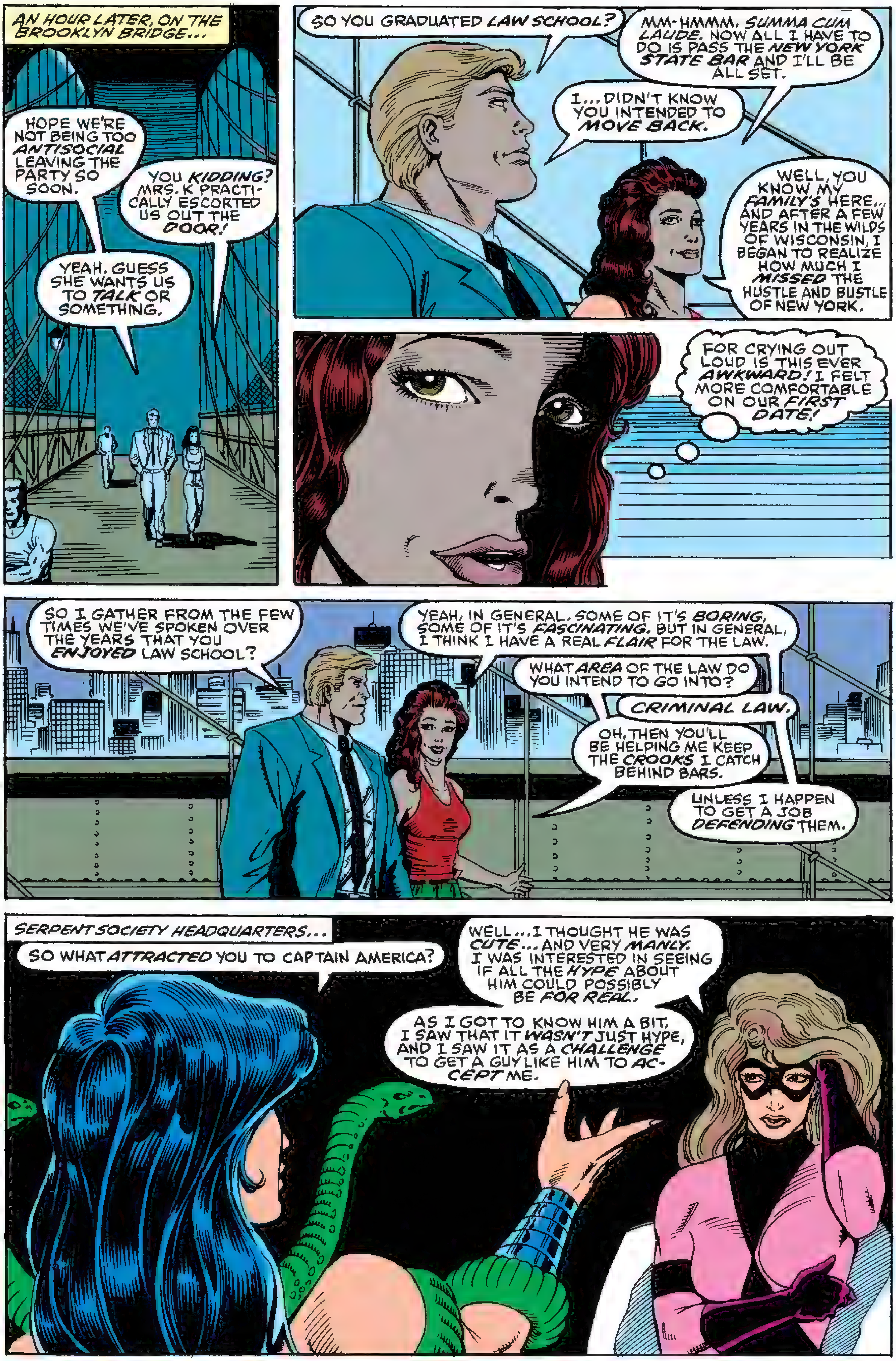

I WAS IN A *BIND*, TANYA, I DIDN'T WANT TO COMPROMISE *HIM* IN ANY WAY, JUST LIKE I DIDN'T WANT TO COMPROMISE ANY OF *YOU!* SO I JUST *SHUT UP* ABOUT HIM TO YOU AND YOU TO HIM!
HOW DID IT *HAPPEN?* HOW'D YOU GET *HOOKED UP* WITH HIM--THE BIGGEST *GOODY TWO-SHOES* IN THE KNOWN WORLD?
"WELL, YOU WERE THERE WHEN I FIRST LAID *EYES* ON HIM--AT THAT MALL WHERE WE WERE HUNTING DOWN THAT RENEGADE ROBOT *MODOK*.
"I SAW HIM *TWICE* AFTER THAT, THE SECOND TIME BEING JUST HIM AND ME STALKING THAT CROOK-KILLER *SCOURGE*...
"HE RESISTED MY *ADVANCES*, OF COURSE, WHICH MADE ME *DESIRE* HIM ALL THE MORE. AS YOU KNOW, *I* WAS THE ONE WHO CALLED HIM IN WHEN THE *VIPER* TRIED TO TAKE OVER OUR OLD HEADQUARTERS...
"ANYWAY, AFTER I LEFT THE SOCIETY, I GOT MYSELF TRAPPED IN A *DEEP PIT*, AND HE CAME TO MY *RESCUE*. I JOINED HIM ON HIS HUNT FOR THIS MYSTIC GEM CALLED THE *BLOODSTONE*...
...AND THAT'S WHEN HE STARTED TO GET TO KNOW ME *BETTER*.
SO HE OBVIOUSLY *KNEW* OF YOUR BACKGROUND, YET HE *STILL* WAS WILLING TO GO OUT WITH YOU?
IT TOOK A LOT OF *CONVINCING*, BUT YES.
BUT *WHY?* WHAT WAS HE HOPING TO *GET* FROM YOU?
RELAX, RACHEL--I'M JUST ASKING *YOU* THE QUESTIONS THE *PROSECUTION* WILL ASK YOU AT THE TRIAL.
FORGIVE ME FOR BEING *BLUNT*, BUT IT JUST DOESN'T SEEM *IN CHARACTER* FOR CAPTAIN AMERICA TO CHOOSE *YOU* OVER ALL THE SUPER-HERO WOMEN HE KNOWS--
--UNLESS HE HAD SOME *ULTERIOR MOTIVE*.
MAYBE, BUT HE NEVER *ASKED* ME TO BETRAY THE SOCIETY. *NEVER!* AND I *DIDN'T!*
OH, TANYA--WHAT'S GOING TO *HAPPEN* TO ME IF THEY FIND ME GUILTY? MINDWIPING AND EXPULSION--LIKE THEY DID TO *PRINCESS PYTHON* WAY BACK WHEN?
I HOPE SO...
...BUT THERE'S A CERTAIN *FACTION* IN THE SOCIETY THAT DEMANDS *BLOOD!*

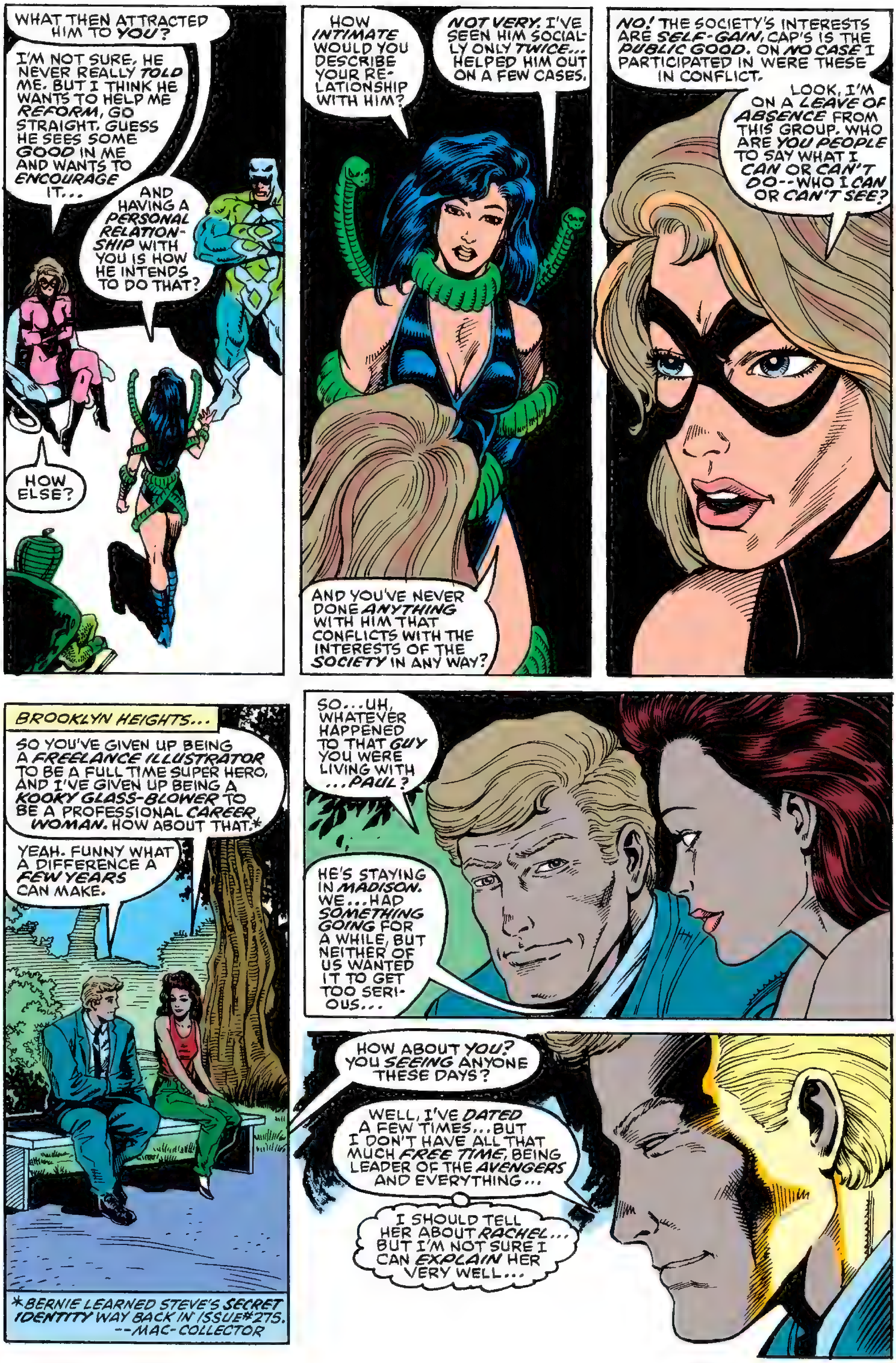

BROOKLYN HEIGHTS, EARLY EVENING...
THANKS FOR THE *LIFT*, JOHN. SORRY YOU'VE HAD TO DO MORE *CHAUFFERING* THAN PILOTING LATELY.
NO PROB!
I'LL GIVE YOU A *CALL* IF I'LL BE ANY LATER THAN *TEN*.
569 LEAMAN STREET. HMH! I LIVED HERE LONGER THAN I LIVED *ANYWHERE ELSE* BESIDES AVENGERS MANSION...
569
SO MANY *MEMORIES*... SEEMS LIKE A LIFETIME AGO.
DON'T KEEP IN *TOUCH* WITH THE *OLD GANG* AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE.
AND...
STEVEN!
WELCOME HOME!
WELCOME HO
MRS. KAPPELBAUM!
I WASN'T SURE YOU'D *MAKE* IT.
WOULDN'T *MISS* IT FOR THE WORLD.
LOOKIN' *GOOD,* STEVIE!
HOWDY, STRANGER!
HEY, *JOSH... MIKE...*
QUITE A *FULL HOUSE* TONIGHT, MRS. K. WHAT'S THE O--
"*WELCOME HOME!*" AW, *GEE,* MRS. KAPPELBAUM, YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE GONE TO ALL THAT--
SILLY BOY, IT'S NOT FOR *YOU*--

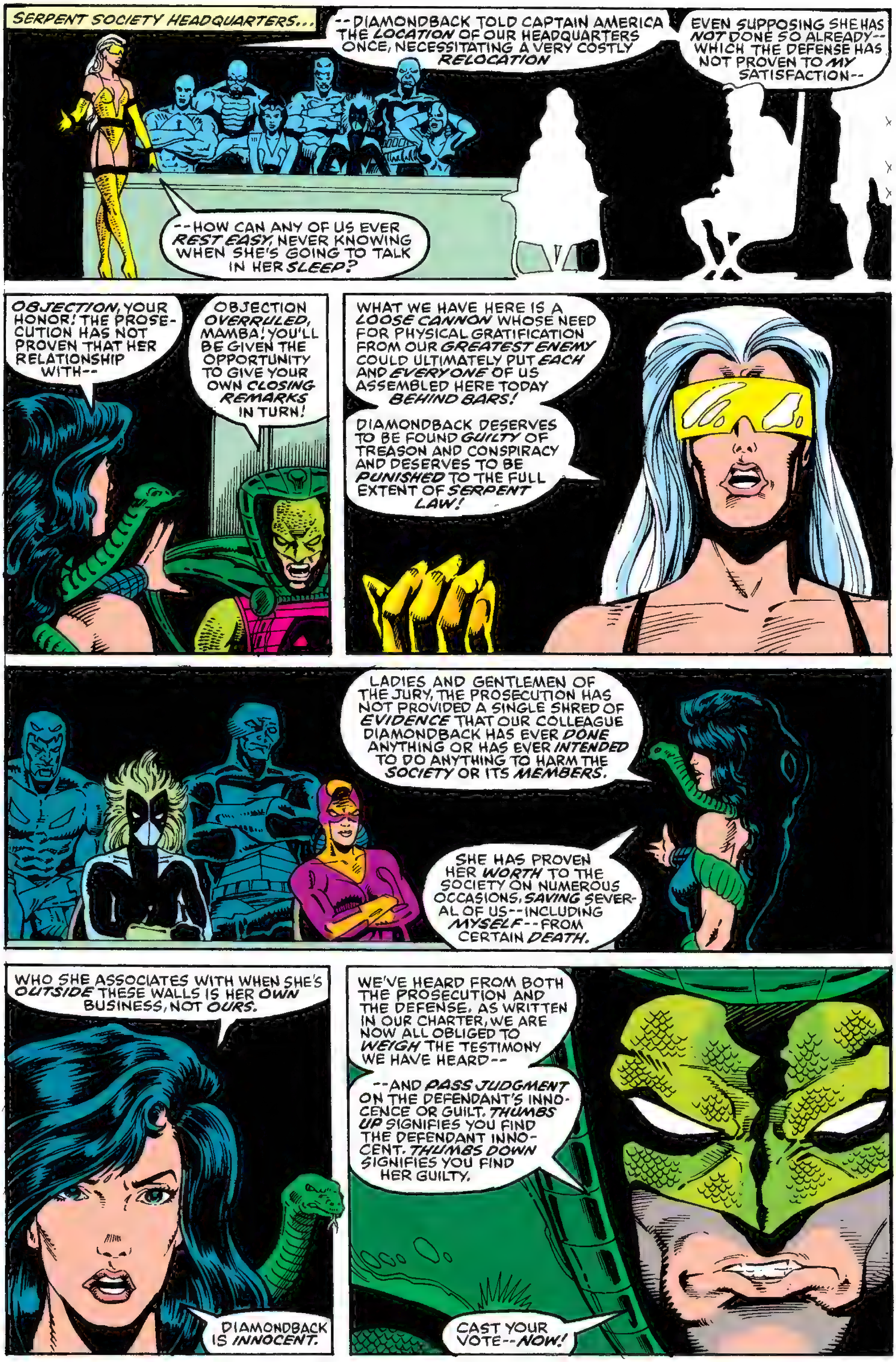

IT'S FOR THE *LADY* STANDING BEHIND YOU. YOU DO REMEMBER *BERNIE ROSENTHAL,* DON'T YOU...?
HI, STEVE.
B-B-B--


ELSEWHERE...
THE *HIGH TRIBUNAL* OF THE SERPENT SOCIETY IS HEREBY CALLED TA *ORDER,* THE NOT-SO-HONORABLE *KING COBRA* PRESIDIN'.
LET THE *DEFENDANT* APPROACH...
DIAMONDBACK, YOU STAND BEFORE YOUR PEERS TODAY ACCUSED OF *CONSPIRACY* AND *TREASON.* HOW DO YOU *PLEAD?*
THE DEFENDANT PLEADS "*NOT GUILTY,*" YOUR HONOR.

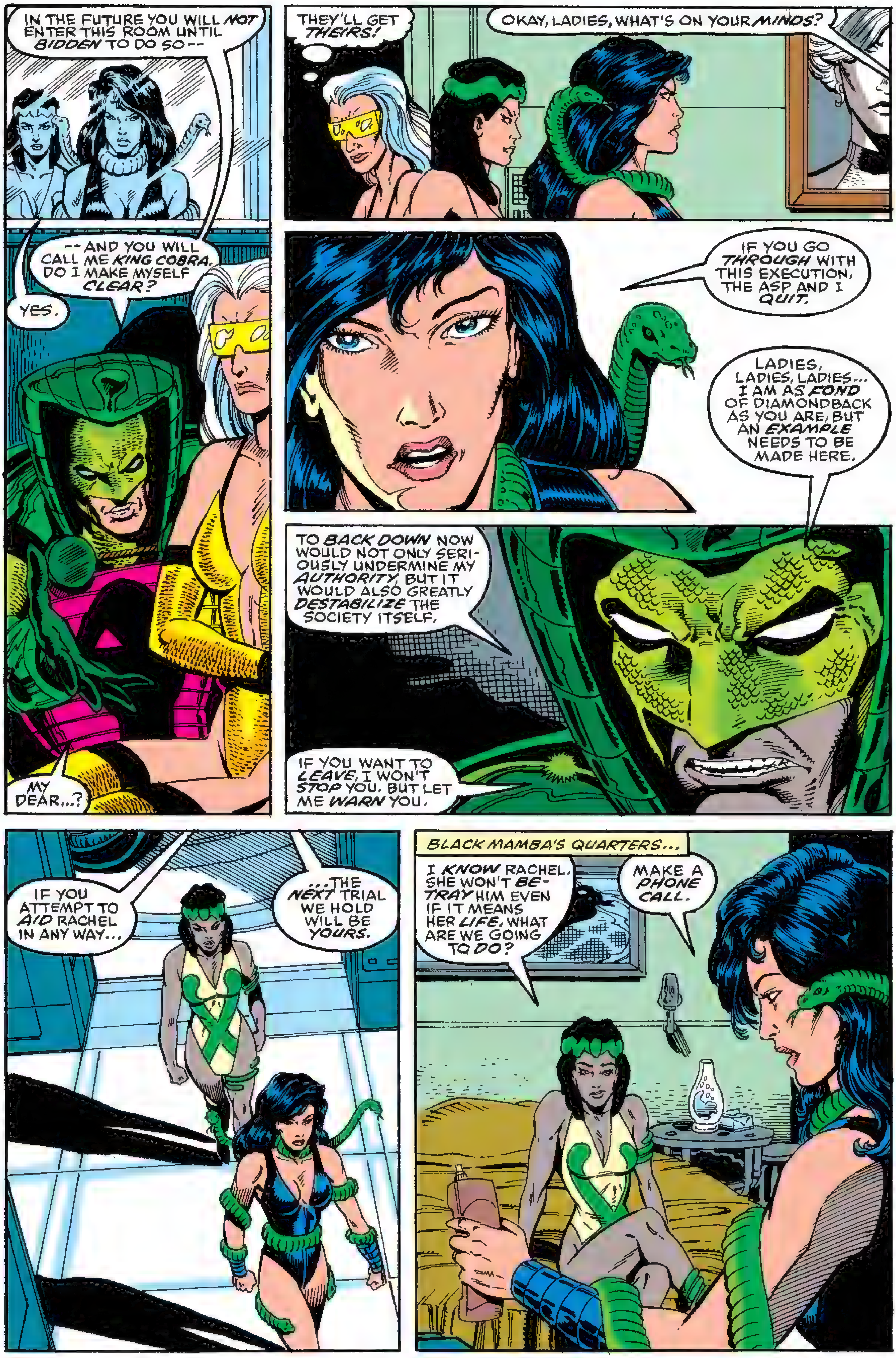

DIAMONDBACK REMAIN, THE REST OF YOU MAY BE SEATED.
PUFF ADDER...?
UH, YOU SWEAR TO TELL THE WHOLE TRUTH AND NUTHIN' BUT THE TRUTH, YOUR LIFE BE, UH--
"FORFEITED!"
--FORFEITED IF YOU DON'T.
YES...
...IF POSSIBLE.
THE PROSECUTION MAY BEGIN THE EXAMINATION.
COACHWHIP...?
DO YOU DENY THAT THE MAN YOU HAVE BEEN SEEING SOCIALLY FOR AT LEAST THE LAST TWO MONTHS IS THE AVENGER KNOWN AS CAPTAIN AMERICA?
I...ADMIT OR DENY NOTHING.
MIGHT I WARN YOU THAT EVASIVE ANSWERS WILL ONLY SERVE TO CONVINCE THE JURY THAT YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO HIDE.
I ADMIT I HAVE SEEN CAPTAIN AMERICA.
HAVE YOU SEEN HIM UNMASKED?
YES.
HAS HE REVEALED HIS REAL NAME TO YOU?
ONLY HIS FIRST NAME.
WHAT IS IT?
I REFUSE TO SAY. JUST AS I HAVE REFUSED TO COMPROMISE ANYTHING I KNOW ABOUT YOU PEOPLE TO HIM, I REFUSE TO COMPROMISE ANYTHING I KNOW ABOUT HIM TO YOU.
YOU CLAIM YOU HAVE NEVER TOLD HIM ANYTHING ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION?
NOTHING.
HE'S NEVER ASKED?
NO.
LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT. YOU WANT US TO BELIEVE THAT THE MOST STRAIT-LACED MAN IN AMERICA BEGAN A RELATIONSHIP WITH A SLEAZY TRAMP, AND HE'S GOT NO ULTERIOR MOTIVES?
OBJECTION, YOUR HONOR. THAT CHARACTERIZATION OF THE DEFENDANT IS UNFAIR.
SUSTAINED, COACHWHIP, PLEASE REPHRASE THE QUESTION.

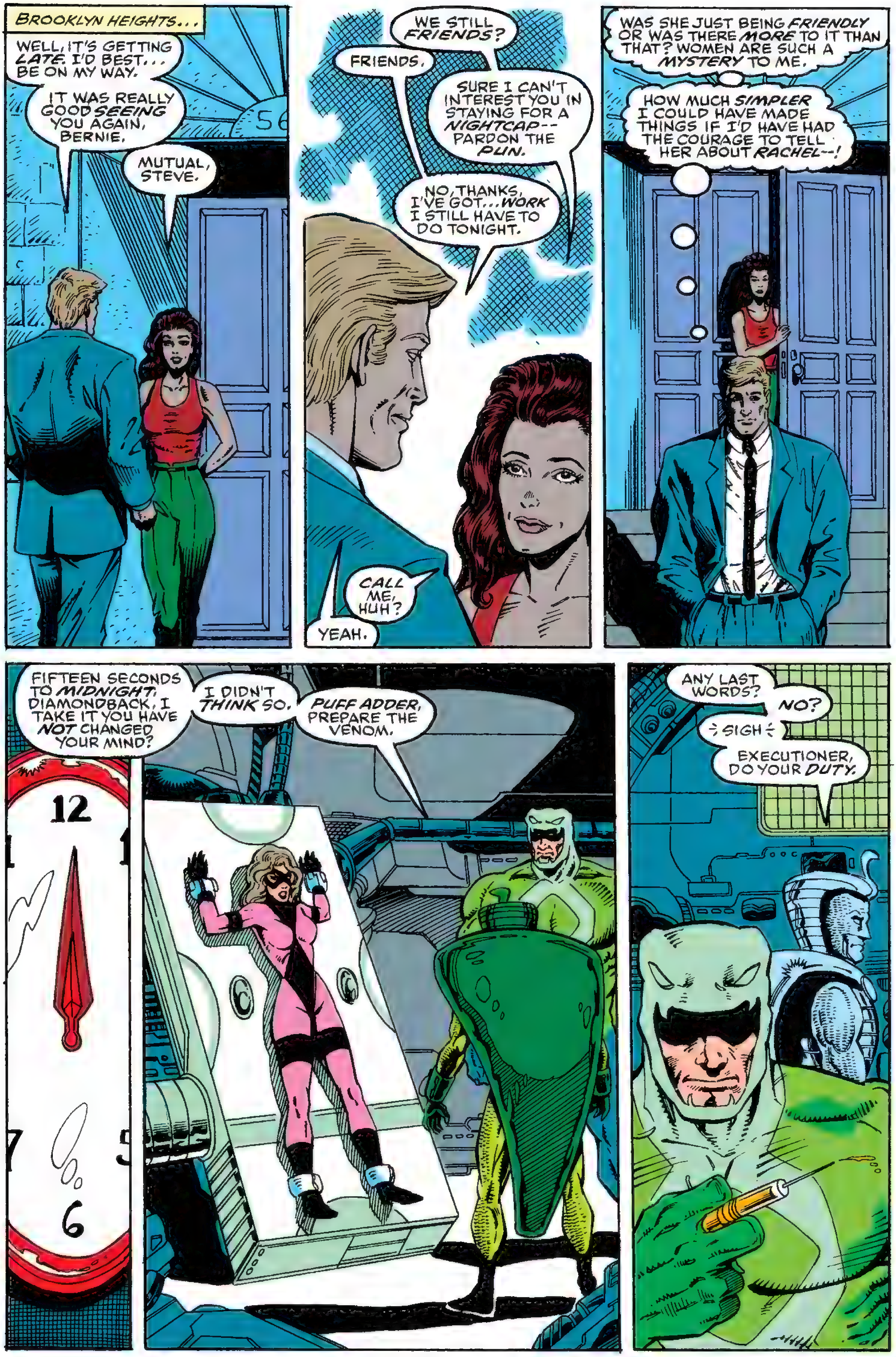

AN HOUR LATER, ON THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE...
HOPE WE'RE NOT BEING TOO ANTISOCIAL LEAVING THE PARTY SO SOON.
YOU KIDDING? MRS. K PRACTICALLY ESCORTED US OUT THE DOOR!
YEAH. GUESS SHE WANTS US TO TALK OR SOMETHING.
SO YOU GRADUATED LAW SCHOOL?
MM-HMMM. SUMMA CUM LAUDE. NOW ALL I HAVE TO DO IS PASS THE NEW YORK STATE BAR AND I'LL BE ALL SET.
I...DIDN'T KNOW YOU INTENDED TO MOVE BACK.
WELL, YOU KNOW MY FAMILY'S HERE... AND AFTER A FEW YEARS IN THE WILDS OF WISCONSIN, I BEGAN TO REALIZE HOW MUCH I MISSED THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE OF NEW YORK.
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD IS THIS EVER AWKWARD! I FELT MORE COMFORTABLE ON OUR FIRST DATE!
SO I GATHER FROM THE FEW TIMES WE'VE SPOKEN OVER THE YEARS THAT YOU ENJOYED LAW SCHOOL?
YEAH, IN GENERAL. SOME OF IT'S BORING, SOME OF IT'S FASCINATING. BUT IN GENERAL, I THINK I HAVE A REAL FLAIR FOR THE LAW.
WHAT AREA OF THE LAW DO YOU INTEND TO GO INTO?
CRIMINAL LAW.
OH, THEN YOU'LL BE HELPING ME KEEP THE CROOKS I CATCH BEHIND BARS.
UNLESS I HAPPEN TO GET A JOB DEFENDING THEM.
SERPENT SOCIETY HEADQUARTERS...
SO WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO CAPTAIN AMERICA?
WELL...I THOUGHT HE WAS CUTE...AND VERY MANLY. I WAS INTERESTED IN SEEING IF ALL THE HYPE ABOUT HIM COULD POSSIBLY BE FOR REAL.
AS I GOT TO KNOW HIM A BIT, I SAW THAT IT WASN'T JUST HYPE, AND I SAW IT AS A CHALLENGE TO GET A GUY LIKE HIM TO ACCEPT ME.

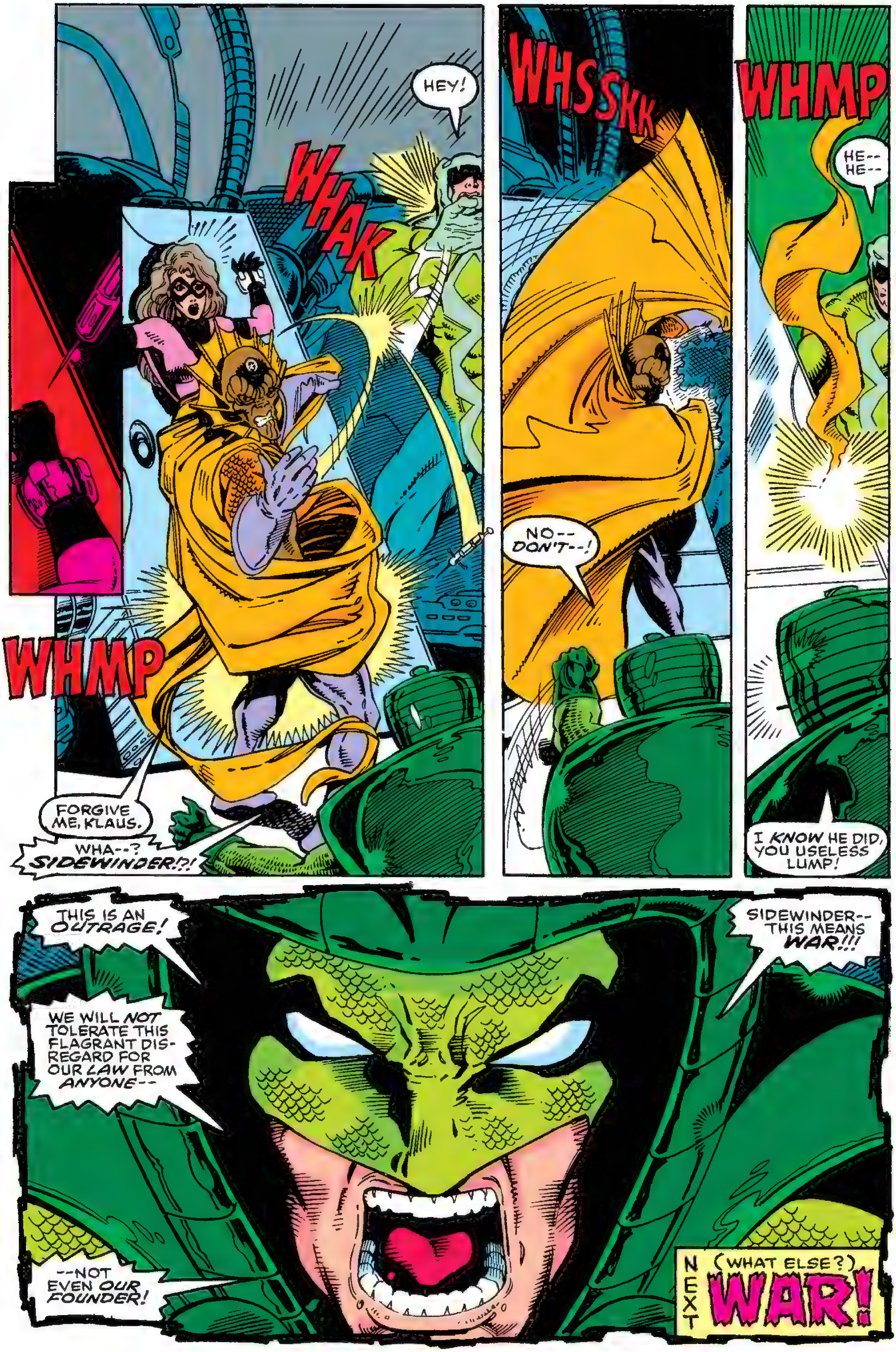

WHAT THEN ATTRACTED HIM TO *YOU?*
I'M NOT SURE. HE NEVER REALLY *TOLD* ME. BUT I THINK HE WANTS TO HELP ME *REFORM*, GO STRAIGHT. GUESS HE SEES SOME *GOOD* IN ME AND WANTS TO *ENCOURAGE* IT...
AND HAVING A *PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP* WITH YOU IS HOW HE INTENDS TO DO THAT?
HOW ELSE?
HOW *INTIMATE* WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM?
NOT VERY. I'VE SEEN HIM SOCIALLY ONLY *TWICE...* HELPED HIM OUT ON A FEW CASES.
AND YOU'VE NEVER DONE *ANYTHING* WITH HIM THAT CONFLICTS WITH THE INTERESTS OF THE *SOCIETY* IN ANY WAY?
NO! THE SOCIETY'S INTERESTS ARE *SELF-GAIN*, CAP'S IS THE *PUBLIC GOOD.* ON *NO CASE* I PARTICIPATED IN WERE THESE IN CONFLICT.
LOOK, I'M ON A *LEAVE OF ABSENCE* FROM THIS GROUP. WHO ARE *YOU PEOPLE* TO SAY WHAT I *CAN OR CAN'T DO*--WHO I *CAN* OR *CAN'T SEE?*
BROOKLYN HEIGHTS...
SO YOU'VE GIVEN UP BEING A *FREELANCE ILLUSTRATOR* TO BE A FULL TIME SUPER HERO, AND I'VE GIVEN UP BEING A *KOOKY GLASS-BLOWER* TO BE A PROFESSIONAL *CAREER WOMAN.* HOW ABOUT THAT.*
YEAH. FUNNY WHAT A DIFFERENCE A *FEW YEARS* CAN MAKE.
*BERNIE LEARNED STEVE'S SECRET IDENTITY WAY BACK IN ISSUE #275. --MAC-COLLECTOR
SO...UH, WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THAT *GUY* YOU WERE LIVING WITH ...*PAUL?*
HE'S STAYING IN *MADISON.* WE...HAD *SOMETHING GOING* FOR A WHILE, BUT NEITHER OF US WANTED IT TO GET TOO SERIOUS...
HOW ABOUT *YOU?* YOU *SEEING* ANYONE THESE DAYS?
WELL, I'VE *DATED* A FEW TIMES...BUT I DON'T HAVE ALL THAT MUCH *FREE TIME*, BEING LEADER OF THE *AVENGERS* AND EVERYTHING...
I SHOULD TELL HER ABOUT *RACHEL...* BUT I'M NOT SURE I CAN *EXPLAIN* HER VERY WELL...


SERPENT SOCIETY HEADQUARTERS...
--DIAMONDBACK TOLD CAPTAIN AMERICA THE *LOCATION* OF OUR HEADQUARTERS ONCE, NECESSITATING A VERY COSTLY *RELOCATION*
EVEN SUPPOSING SHE HAS *NOT* DONE SO ALREADY-- WHICH THE DEFENSE HAS NOT PROVEN TO *MY* SATISFACTION--
--HOW CAN ANY OF US EVER *REST EASY,* NEVER KNOWING WHEN SHE'S GOING TO TALK IN HER *SLEEP?*
OBJECTION, YOUR HONOR! THE PROSECUTION HAS NOT PROVEN THAT HER RELATIONSHIP WITH--
OBJECTION *OVERRULED,* MAMBA! YOU'LL BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE YOUR OWN *CLOSING REMARKS* IN TURN!
WHAT WE HAVE HERE IS A *LOOSE CANNON* WHOSE NEED FOR PHYSICAL GRATIFICATION FROM OUR *GREATEST ENEMY* COULD ULTIMATELY PUT *EACH* AND *EVERYONE* OF US ASSEMBLED HERE TODAY *BEHIND BARS!*
DIAMONDBACK DESERVES TO BE FOUND *GUILTY* OF TREASON AND CONSPIRACY AND DESERVES TO BE *PUNISHED* TO THE FULL EXTENT OF *SERPENT LAW!*
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY, THE PROSECUTION HAS NOT PROVIDED A SINGLE SHRED OF *EVIDENCE* THAT OUR COLLEAGUE DIAMONDBACK HAS EVER *DONE* ANYTHING OR HAS EVER *INTENDED* TO DO ANYTHING TO HARM THE *SOCIETY* OR ITS *MEMBERS.*
SHE HAS PROVEN HER *WORTH* TO THE SOCIETY ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS, *SAVING* SEVERAL OF US--INCLUDING *MYSELF*--FROM CERTAIN *DEATH.*
WHO SHE ASSOCIATES WITH WHEN SHE'S *OUTSIDE* THESE WALLS IS HER *OWN* BUSINESS, NOT *OURS.*
DIAMONDBACK IS *INNOCENT.*
WE'VE HEARD FROM BOTH THE PROSECUTION AND THE DEFENSE. AS WRITTEN IN OUR CHARTER, WE ARE NOW ALL OBLIGED TO *WEIGH* THE TESTIMONY WE HAVE HEARD--
--AND *PASS JUDGMENT* ON THE DEFENDANT'S INNOCENCE OR GUILT. *THUMBS UP* SIGNIFIES YOU FIND THE DEFENDANT INNOCENT. *THUMBS DOWN* SIGNIFIES YOU FIND HER GUILTY.
CAST YOUR VOTE--*NOW!*

FOUR SAY SHE IS INNOCENT-- SEVEN SAY SHE IS GUILTY. THE MAJORITY RULES.
DIAMONDBACK, THE MAJORITY OF YOUR PEERS FIND YOU GUILTY OF TREASON AND CONSPIRACY. THE PUNISHMENT FOR TREASON IS DEATH BY LETHAL INJECTION.
HOWEVER, AS JUDGE, I CAN COMMUTE YOUR SENTENCE IF YOU ARE WILLING TO COOPERATE WITH US AND TELL US EVERYTHING WE WANT TO KNOW ABOUT CAPTAIN AMERICA.
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, COBRA--
--STICK IT UP YOUR MASK.
THEN DEATH IT IS. YOU HAVE UNTIL MIDNIGHT TO CHANGE YOUR MIND.
THIS COURT IS HEREBY ADJOURNED!
A HALF HOUR LATER, IN KING COBRA'S OFFICE...
THERE, THERE, CUTEY-PIE, IT'S-- AHEM!
WE NEED TO TALK TO YOU, COBRA--
--ALONE.


IN THE FUTURE YOU WILL *NOT* ENTER THIS ROOM UNTIL *BIDDEN* TO DO SO--
THEY'LL GET *THEIRS!*
OKAY, LADIES, WHAT'S ON YOUR *MINDS?*
--AND YOU WILL CALL ME *KING COBRA.* DO I MAKE MYSELF *CLEAR?*
YES.
MY DEAR...?
IF YOU GO *THROUGH* WITH THIS EXECUTION, THE ASP AND I *QUIT.*
LADIES, LADIES, LADIES... I AM AS *FOND* OF DIAMONDBACK AS YOU ARE, BUT AN *EXAMPLE* NEEDS TO BE MADE HERE.
TO *BACK DOWN* NOW WOULD NOT ONLY SERIOUSLY UNDERMINE MY *AUTHORITY,* BUT IT WOULD ALSO GREATLY *DESTABILIZE* THE SOCIETY ITSELF.
IF YOU WANT TO *LEAVE,* I WON'T *STOP* YOU. BUT LET ME *WARN* YOU.
IF YOU ATTEMPT TO *AID* RACHEL IN ANY WAY...
...THE *NEXT* TRIAL WE HOLD WILL BE *YOURS.*
BLACK MAMBA'S QUARTERS...
I *KNOW* RACHEL. SHE WON'T *BETRAY* HIM EVEN IF IT MEANS HER *LIFE.* WHAT ARE WE GOING TO *DO?*
MAKE A *PHONE CALL.*

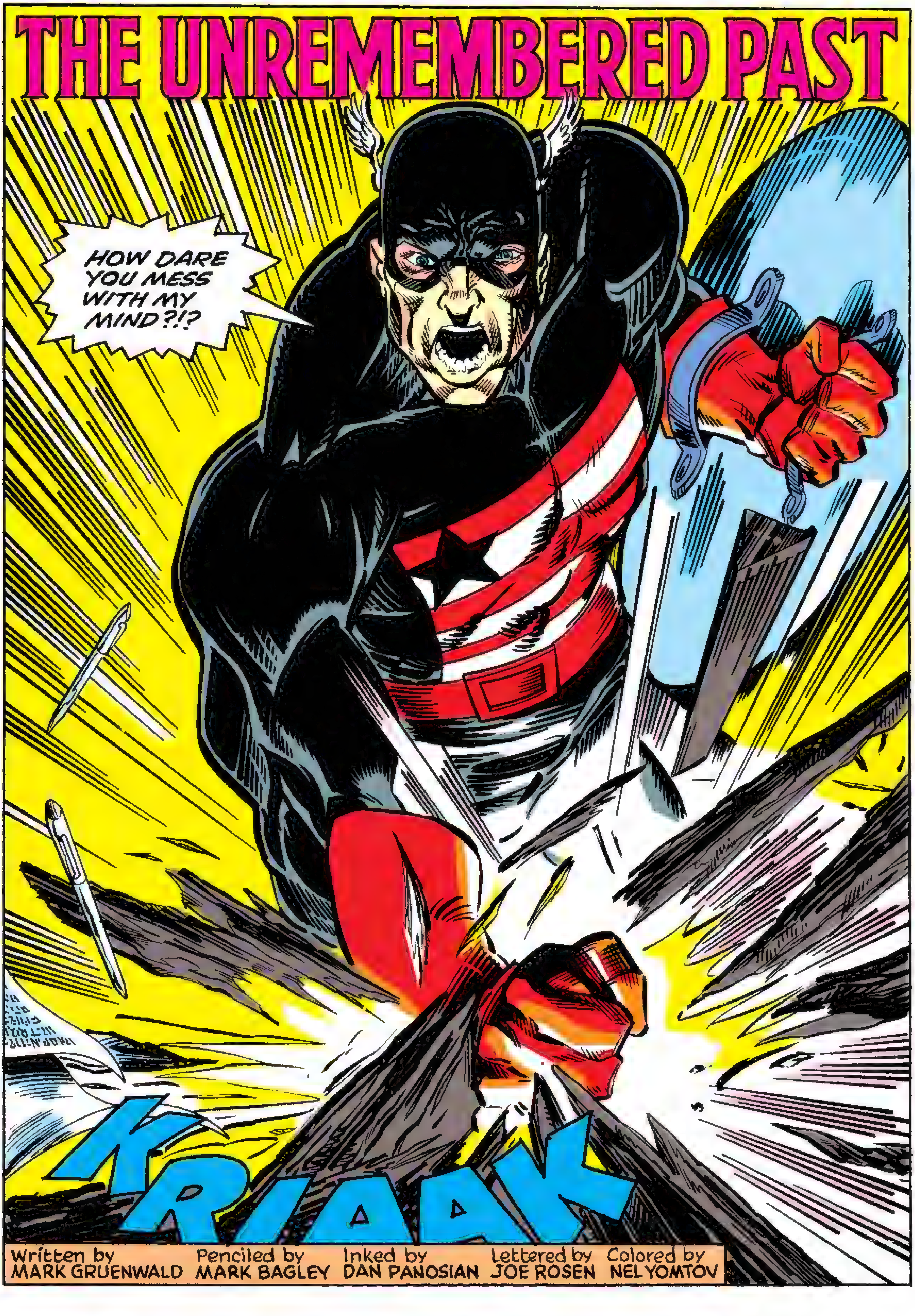

BROOKLYN HEIGHTS...
WELL, IT'S GETTING LATE. I'D BEST... BE ON MY WAY.
IT WAS REALLY GOOD SEEING YOU AGAIN, BERNIE.
MUTUAL, STEVE.
WE STILL FRIENDS?
FRIENDS.
SURE I CAN'T INTEREST YOU IN STAYING FOR A NIGHTCAP-- PARDON THE PUN.
NO, THANKS, I'VE GOT... WORK I STILL HAVE TO DO TONIGHT.
CALL ME, HUH?
YEAH.
WAS SHE JUST BEING FRIENDLY OR WAS THERE MORE TO IT THAN THAT? WOMEN ARE SUCH A MYSTERY TO ME.
HOW MUCH SIMPLER I COULD HAVE MADE THINGS IF I'D HAVE HAD THE COURAGE TO TELL HER ABOUT RACHEL--!
FIFTEEN SECONDS TO MIDNIGHT, DIAMONDBACK. I TAKE IT YOU HAVE NOT CHANGED YOUR MIND?
I DIDN'T THINK SO.
PUFF ADDER, PREPARE THE VENOM.
12
6
ANY LAST WORDS?
NO?
SIGH
EXECUTIONER, DO YOUR DUTY.


HEY!
WHAK
FORGIVE ME, KLAUS.
WHA--? SIDEWINDER!?!
WHMP
WHSSKK
NO-- DON'T--!
WHMP
HE-- HE--
I KNOW HE DID, YOU USELESS LUMP!
THIS IS AN OUTRAGE!
WE WILL NOT TOLERATE THIS FLAGRANT DISREGARD FOR OUR LAW FROM ANYONE--
--NOT EVEN OUR FOUNDER!
SIDEWINDER-- THIS MEANS WAR!!!
NEXT (WHAT ELSE?) WAR!

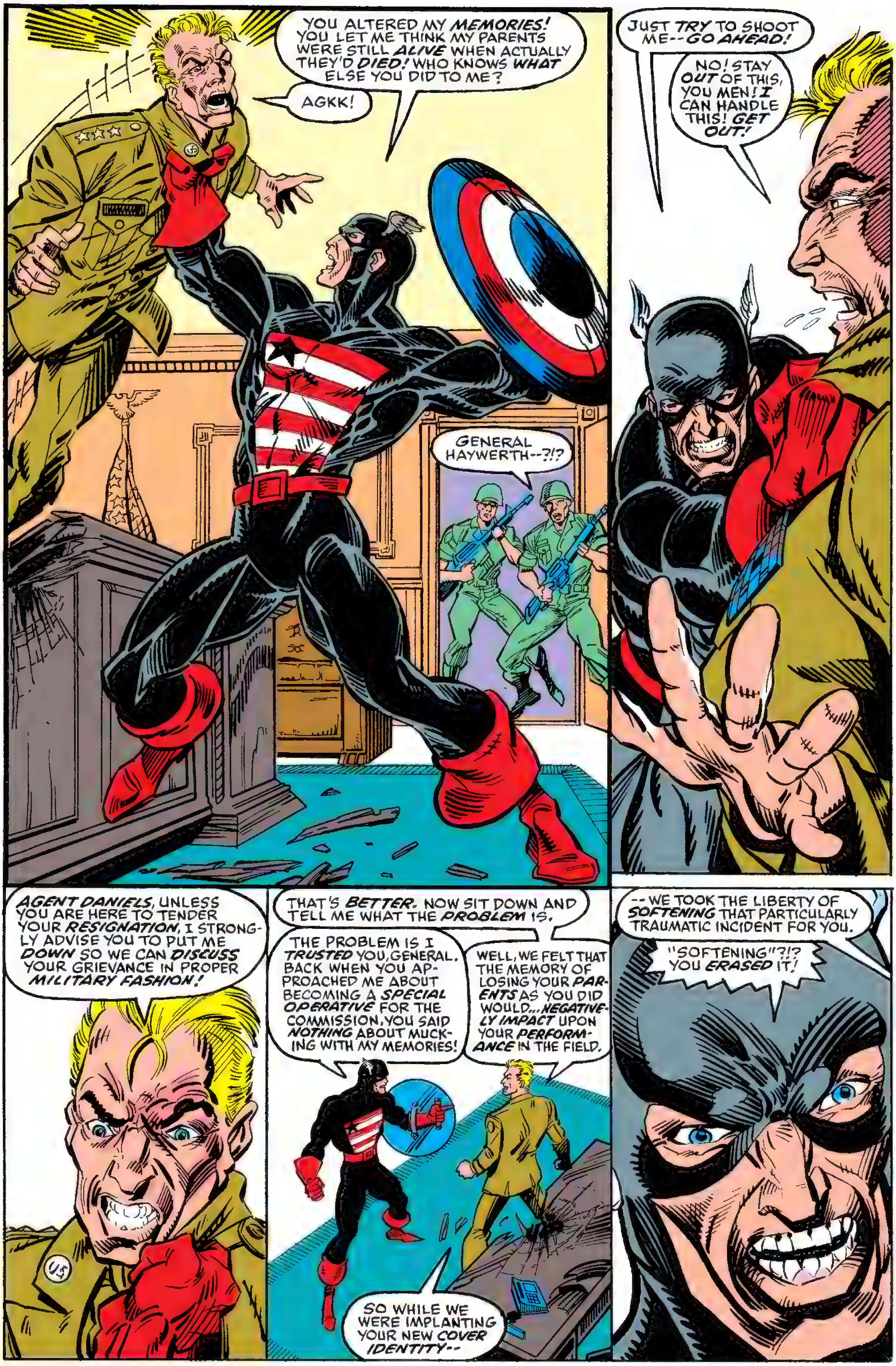
WHEN THE GOVERNMENT FORCED CAPTAIN AMERICA TO RESIGN, THERE WAS ONE MAN THEY DEEMED FIT TO REPLACE HIM. HIS NAME WAS ***JOHN WALKER****, AND HE BROUGHT HIS OWN BRAND OF PATRIOTISM TO THE JOB. WITH CAP'S RETURN, THE STRENGTH-AUGMENTED SUPER-PATRIOT ASSUMED A NEW GUISE, BECOMING THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S FOREMOST COSTUMED OPERATIVE! STAN LEE PRESENTS . . .*

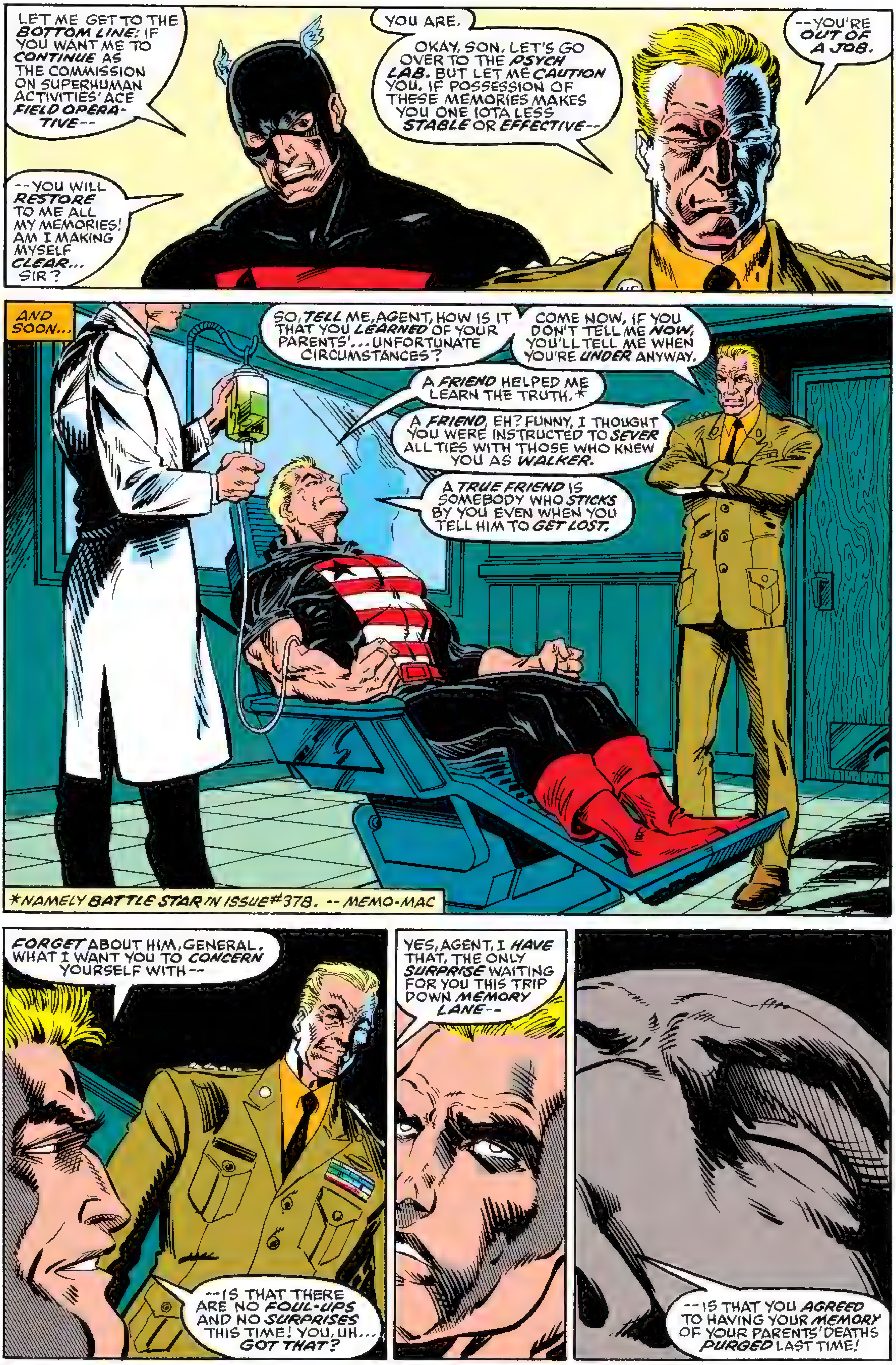
U.S.AGENT!

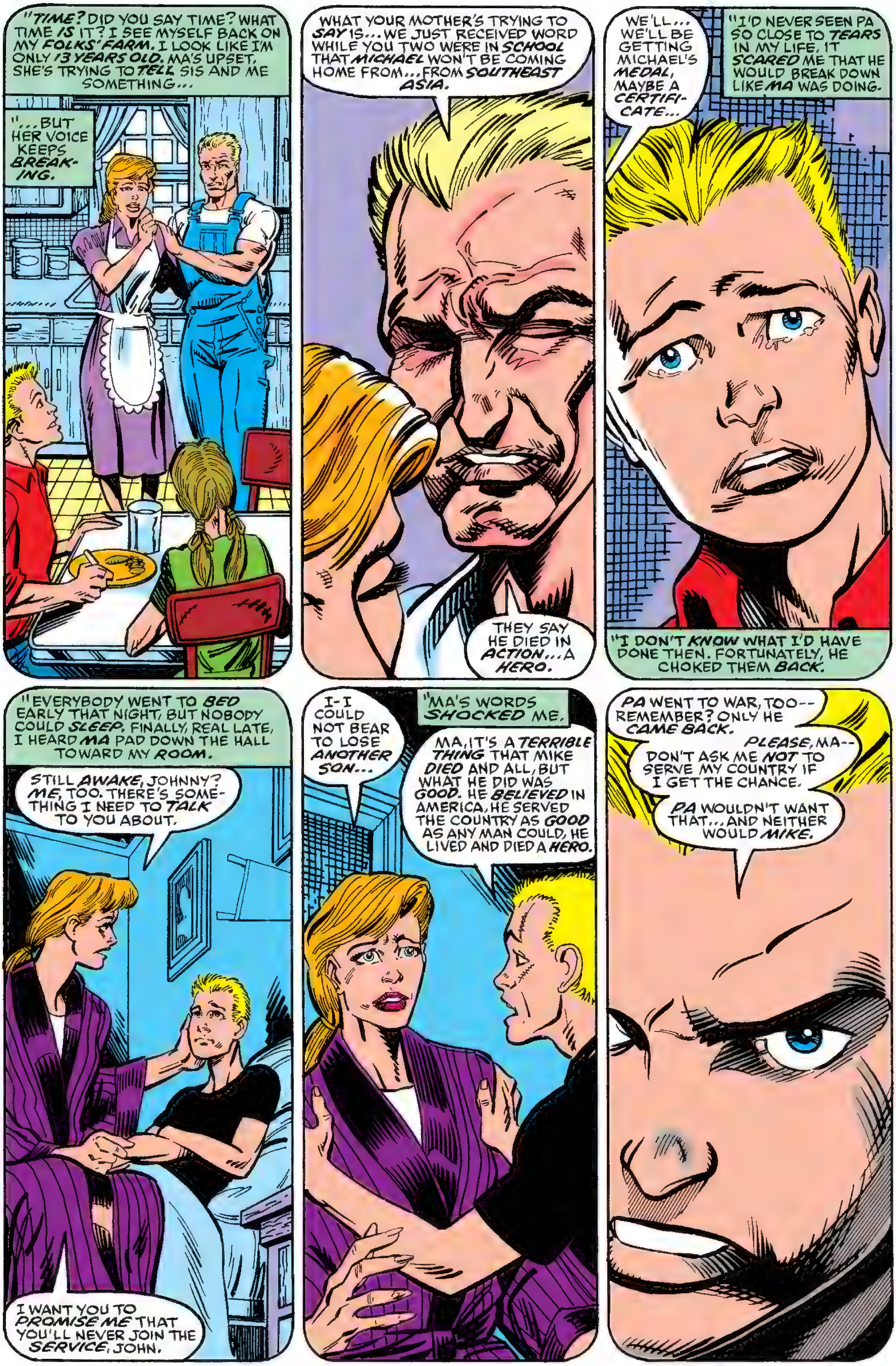
THE UNREMEMBERED PAST

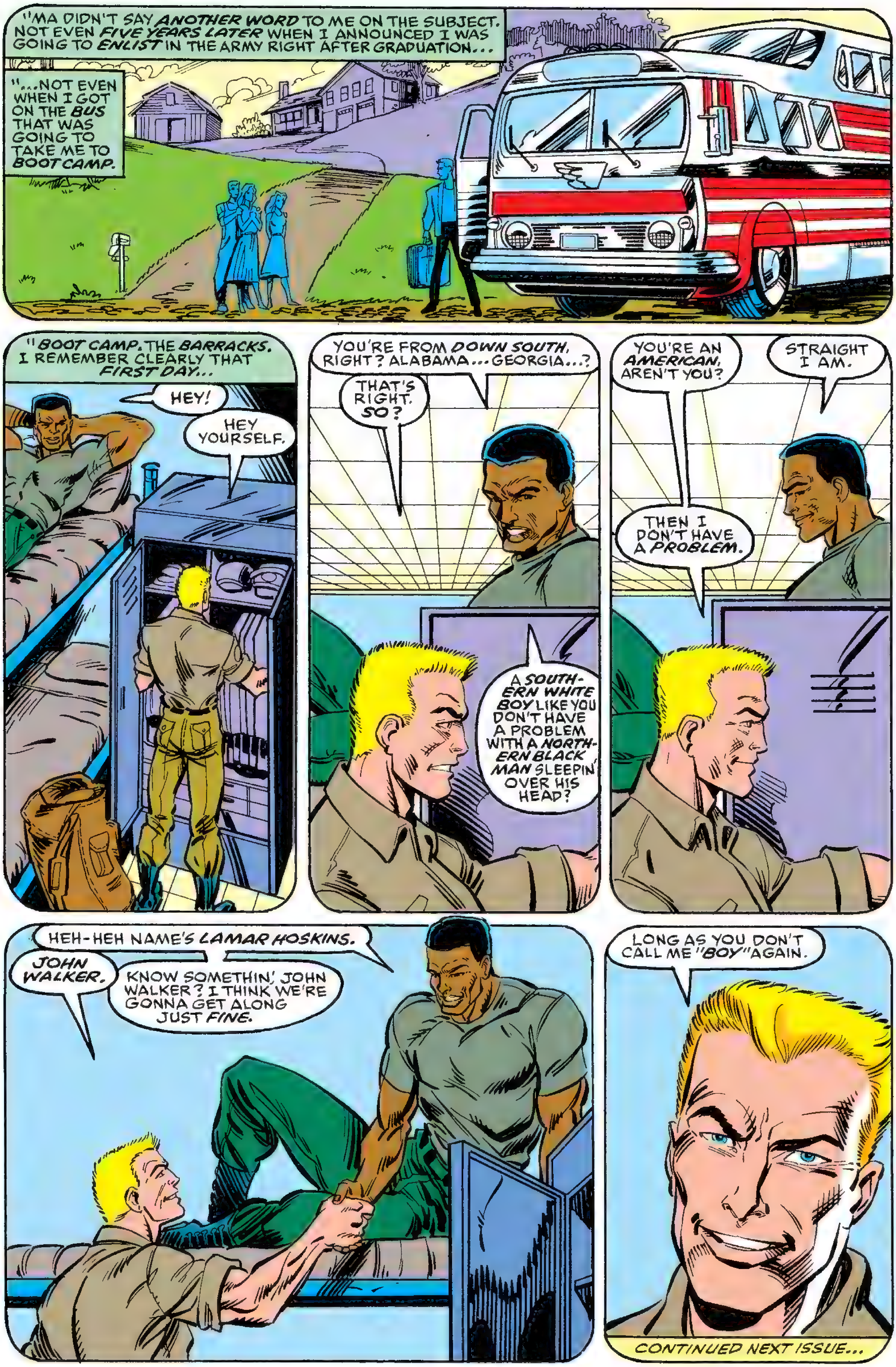

HOW DARE YOU MESS WITH MY MIND?!?
KRAAK

Written by MARK GRUENWALD Penciled by MARK BAGLEY Inked by DAN PANOSIAN Lettered by JOE ROSEN Colored by NEL YOMTOV


YOU ALTERED MY *MEMORIES!* YOU LET ME THINK MY PARENTS WERE STILL *ALIVE* WHEN ACTUALLY THEY'D *DIED!* WHO KNOWS *WHAT* ELSE YOU DID TO ME?
AGKK!
GENERAL HAYWERTH--?!?
JUST *TRY* TO SHOOT ME--*GO AHEAD!*
NO! STAY *OUT* OF THIS, YOU MEN! *I* CAN HANDLE THIS! *GET OUT!*
AGENT DANIELS, UNLESS YOU ARE HERE TO TENDER YOUR *RESIGNATION,* I STRONGLY ADVISE YOU TO PUT ME *DOWN* SO WE CAN *DISCUSS* YOUR GRIEVANCE IN PROPER *MILITARY FASHION!*
THAT'S *BETTER.* NOW SIT DOWN AND TELL ME WHAT THE *PROBLEM* IS.
THE PROBLEM IS I *TRUSTED* YOU, GENERAL. BACK WHEN YOU APPROACHED ME ABOUT BECOMING A *SPECIAL OPERATIVE* FOR THE COMMISSION, YOU SAID *NOTHING* ABOUT MUCKING WITH MY MEMORIES!
WELL, WE FELT THAT THE MEMORY OF LOSING YOUR *PARENTS* AS YOU DID WOULD... *NEGATIVELY IMPACT* UPON YOUR *PERFORMANCE* IN THE FIELD.
SO WHILE WE WERE IMPLANTING YOUR NEW *COVER IDENTITY*--
--WE TOOK THE LIBERTY OF *SOFTENING* THAT PARTICULARLY TRAUMATIC INCIDENT FOR YOU.
"SOFTENING"?!? YOU *ERASED* IT!


LET ME GET TO THE BOTTOM LINE: IF YOU WANT ME TO CONTINUE AS THE COMMISSION ON SUPERHUMAN ACTIVITIES' ACE FIELD OPERATIVE--
--YOU WILL RESTORE TO ME ALL MY MEMORIES! AM I MAKING MYSELF CLEAR... SIR?
YOU ARE.
OKAY, SON, LET'S GO OVER TO THE PSYCH LAB. BUT LET ME CAUTION YOU. IF POSSESSION OF THESE MEMORIES MAKES YOU ONE IOTA LESS STABLE OR EFFECTIVE--
--YOU'RE OUT OF A JOB.
AND SOON...
SO, TELL ME, AGENT, HOW IS IT THAT YOU LEARNED OF YOUR PARENTS'... UNFORTUNATE CIRCUMSTANCES?
COME NOW, IF YOU DON'T TELL ME NOW, YOU'LL TELL ME WHEN YOU'RE UNDER ANYWAY.
A FRIEND HELPED ME LEARN THE TRUTH.*
A FRIEND, EH? FUNNY, I THOUGHT YOU WERE INSTRUCTED TO SEVER ALL TIES WITH THOSE WHO KNEW YOU AS WALKER.
A TRUE FRIEND IS SOMEBODY WHO STICKS BY YOU EVEN WHEN YOU TELL HIM TO GET LOST.
*NAMELY BATTLE STAR IN ISSUE #378. --MEMO-MAC
FORGET ABOUT HIM, GENERAL. WHAT I WANT YOU TO CONCERN YOURSELF WITH--
--IS THAT THERE ARE NO FOUL-UPS AND NO SURPRISES THIS TIME! YOU, UH... GOT THAT?
YES, AGENT, I HAVE THAT. THE ONLY SURPRISE WAITING FOR YOU THIS TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE--
--IS THAT YOU AGREED TO HAVING YOUR MEMORY OF YOUR PARENTS' DEATHS PURGED LAST TIME!


"TIME? DID YOU SAY TIME? WHAT TIME IS IT? I SEE MYSELF BACK ON MY FOLKS' FARM. I LOOK LIKE I'M ONLY 13 YEARS OLD. MA'S UPSET. SHE'S TRYING TO TELL SIS AND ME SOMETHING...
"...BUT HER VOICE KEEPS BREAKING.
WHAT YOUR MOTHER'S TRYING TO SAY IS... WE JUST RECEIVED WORD WHILE YOU TWO WERE IN SCHOOL THAT MICHAEL WON'T BE COMING HOME FROM... FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA.
THEY SAY HE DIED IN ACTION... A HERO.
WE'LL... WE'LL BE GETTING MICHAEL'S MEDAL, MAYBE A CERTIFICATE...
"I'D NEVER SEEN PA SO CLOSE TO TEARS IN MY LIFE. IT SCARED ME THAT HE WOULD BREAK DOWN LIKE MA WAS DOING.
"I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D HAVE DONE THEN. FORTUNATELY, HE CHOKED THEM BACK.
"EVERYBODY WENT TO BED EARLY THAT NIGHT, BUT NOBODY COULD SLEEP. FINALLY, REAL LATE, I HEARD MA PAD DOWN THE HALL TOWARD MY ROOM.
STILL AWAKE, JOHNNY? ME, TOO. THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.
I WANT YOU TO PROMISE ME THAT YOU'LL NEVER JOIN THE SERVICE, JOHN.
I-I COULD NOT BEAR TO LOSE ANOTHER SON...
"MA'S WORDS SHOCKED ME.
MA, IT'S A TERRIBLE THING THAT MIKE DIED AND ALL, BUT WHAT HE DID WAS GOOD. HE BELIEVED IN AMERICA, HE SERVED THE COUNTRY AS GOOD AS ANY MAN COULD, HE LIVED AND DIED A HERO.
PA WENT TO WAR, TOO-- REMEMBER? ONLY HE CAME BACK.
PLEASE, MA-- DON'T ASK ME NOT TO SERVE MY COUNTRY IF I GET THE CHANCE.
PA WOULDN'T WANT THAT... AND NEITHER WOULD MIKE.


"MA DIDN'T SAY ANOTHER WORD TO ME ON THE SUBJECT. NOT EVEN FIVE YEARS LATER WHEN I ANNOUNCED I WAS GOING TO ENLIST IN THE ARMY RIGHT AFTER GRADUATION...
"...NOT EVEN WHEN I GOT ON THE BUS THAT WAS GOING TO TAKE ME TO BOOT CAMP.
"BOOT CAMP. THE BARRACKS. I REMEMBER CLEARLY THAT FIRST DAY...
HEY!
HEY YOURSELF.
YOU'RE FROM DOWN SOUTH, RIGHT? ALABAMA... GEORGIA...?
THAT'S RIGHT. SO?
A SOUTHERN WHITE BOY LIKE YOU DON'T HAVE A PROBLEM WITH A NORTHERN BLACK MAN SLEEPIN' OVER HIS HEAD?
YOU'RE AN AMERICAN, AREN'T YOU?
STRAIGHT I AM.
THEN I DON'T HAVE A PROBLEM.
HEH-HEH NAME'S LAMAR HOSKINS.
JOHN WALKER.
KNOW SOMETHIN', JOHN WALKER? I THINK WE'RE GONNA GET ALONG JUST FINE.
LONG AS YOU DON'T CALL ME "BOY" AGAIN.
CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE...

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JAN
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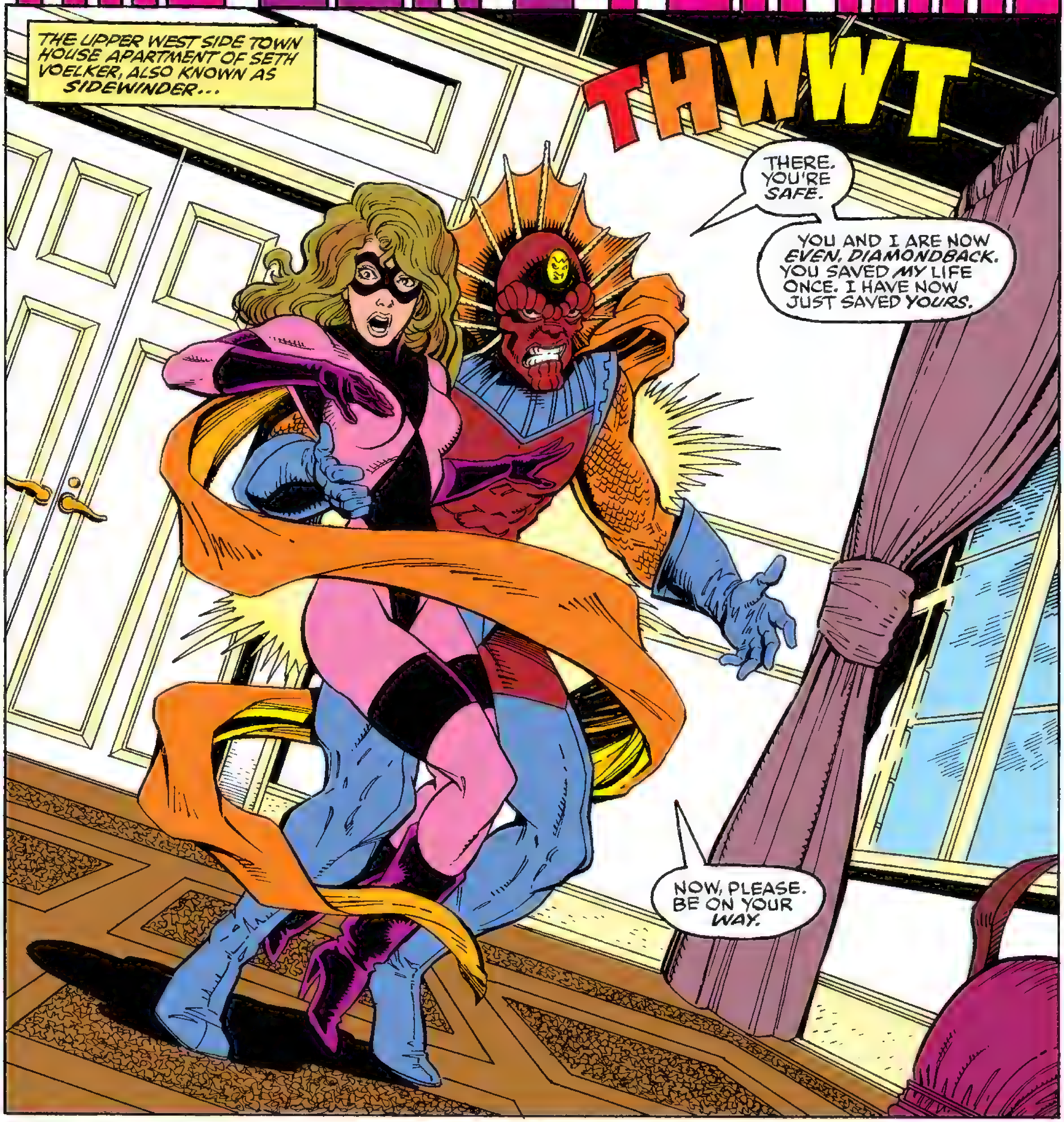
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THIS GUN'S FOR HIRE!
PALADIN
IF YOU WON'T HELP ME NAIL THE *SERPENT SOCIETY*, CAP-- I'LL FIND SOMEONE WHO WILL!
RON LIM 90
DAN BULANADI

STEVE ROGERS . . . *BORN IN THE U.S.A., RAISED TO CHERISH THE IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY, ENDOWED WITH A SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE, AND DRIVEN TO BE THE MOST CAPABLE COMBATANT IN THE WORLD. NOW AS BOTH LONE CRUSADER AND LEADER OF THE RENOWNED AVENGERS, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM!*

Stan Lee PRESENTS:

CAPTAIN AMERICA!

THIS GUN'S FOR HIRE


THE UPPER WEST SIDE TOWN HOUSE APARTMENT OF SETH VOELKER, ALSO KNOWN AS SIDEWINDER...
THWWT
THERE. YOU'RE SAFE.
YOU AND I ARE NOW EVEN, DIAMONDBACK. YOU SAVED MY LIFE ONCE. I HAVE NOW JUST SAVED YOURS.
NOW, PLEASE. BE ON YOUR WAY.

MARK GRUENWALD writer
RON LIM penciler
DANNY BULANADI inker
JOE ROSEN letterer
MAX SCHEELE colorist
RALPH MACCHIO editor
TOM DeFALCO serpent in chief

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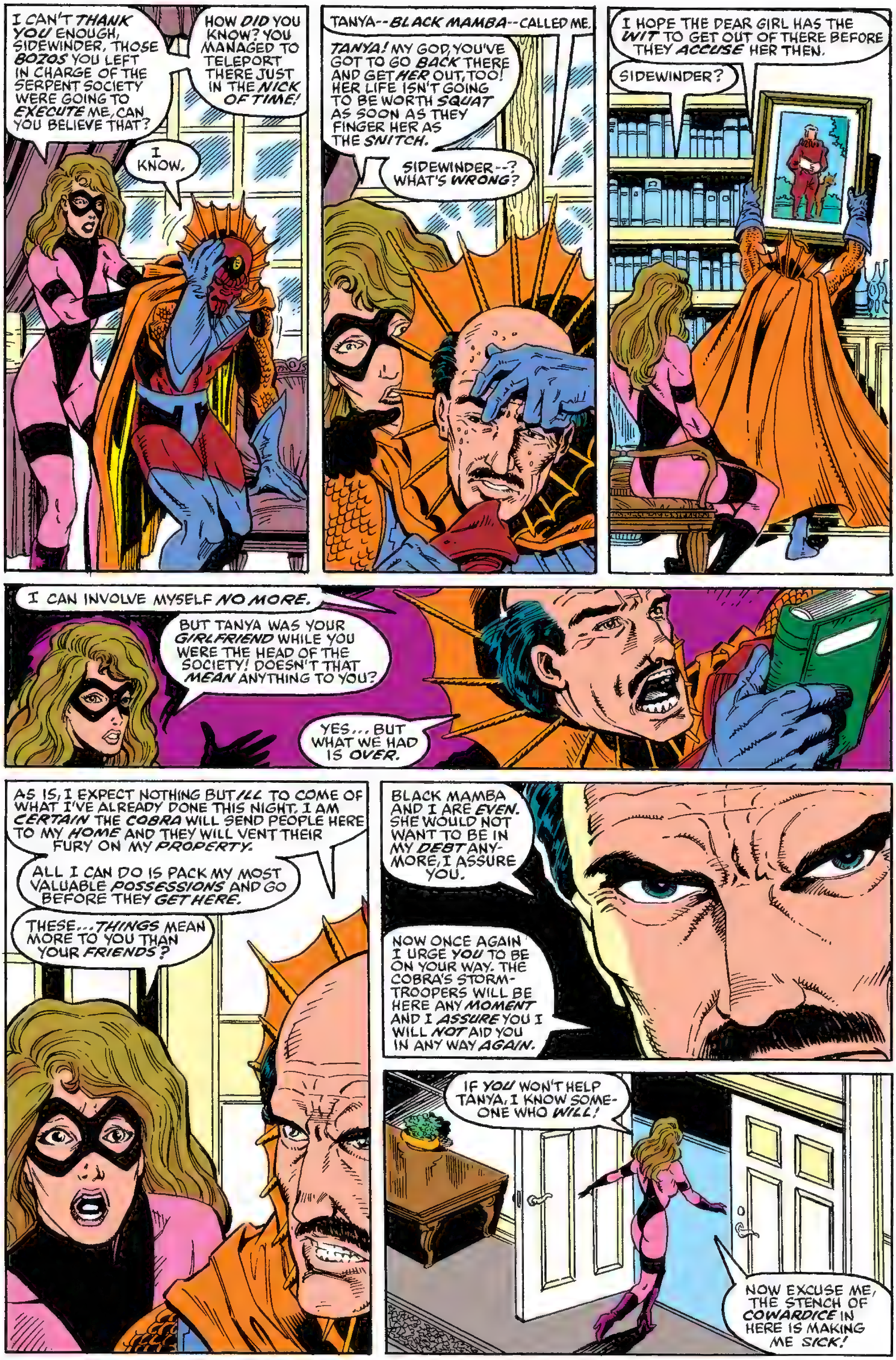
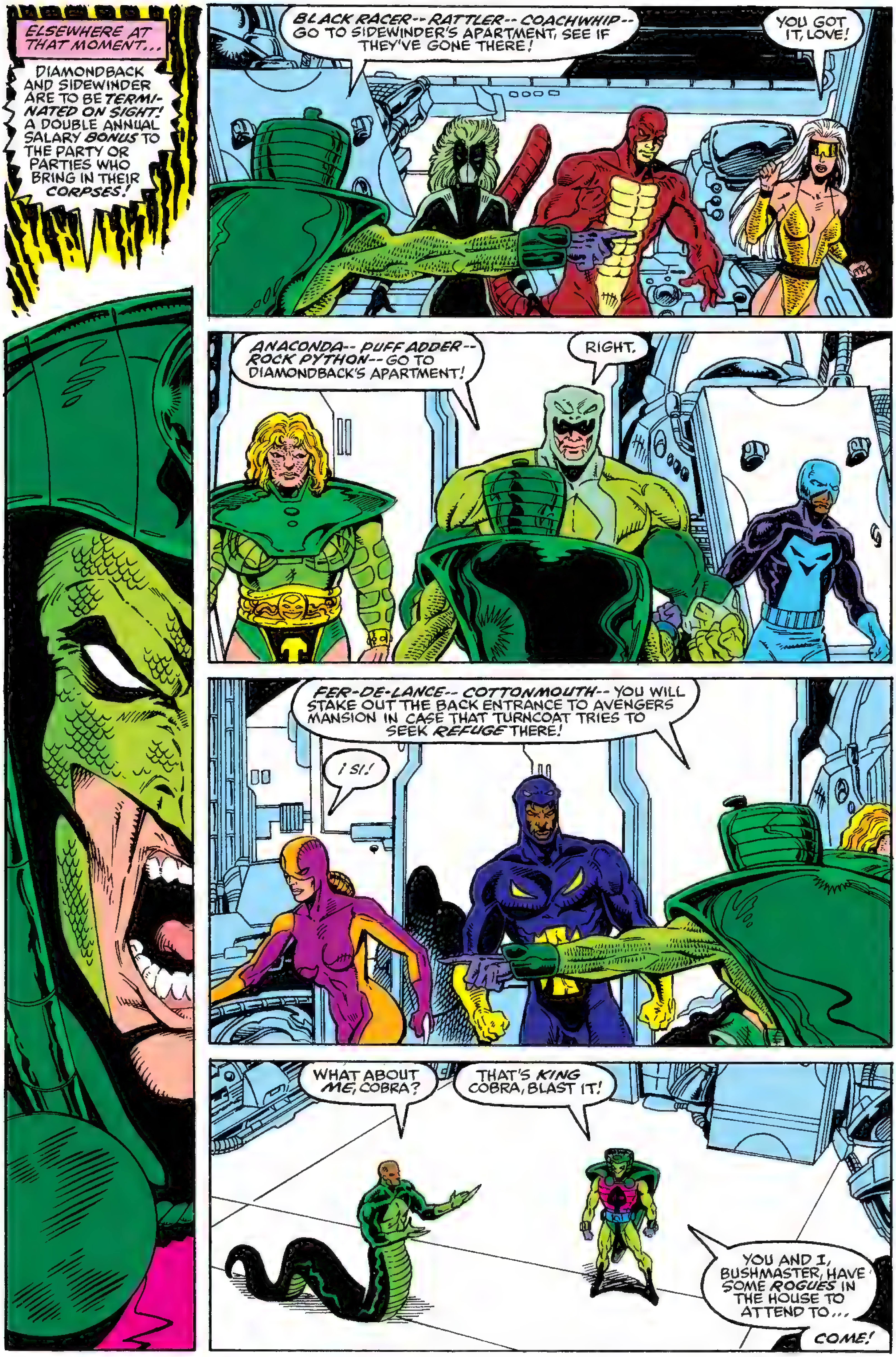
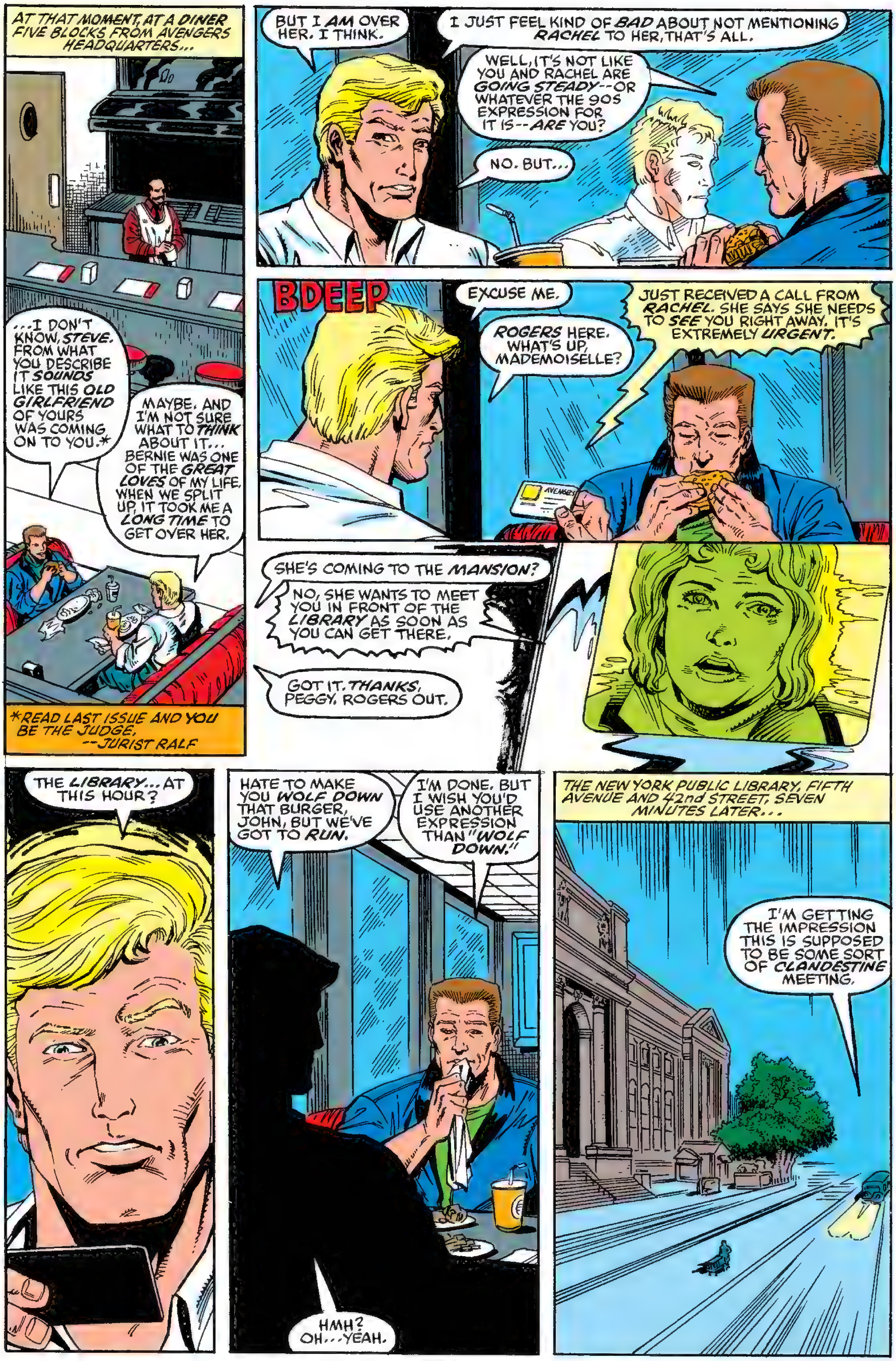
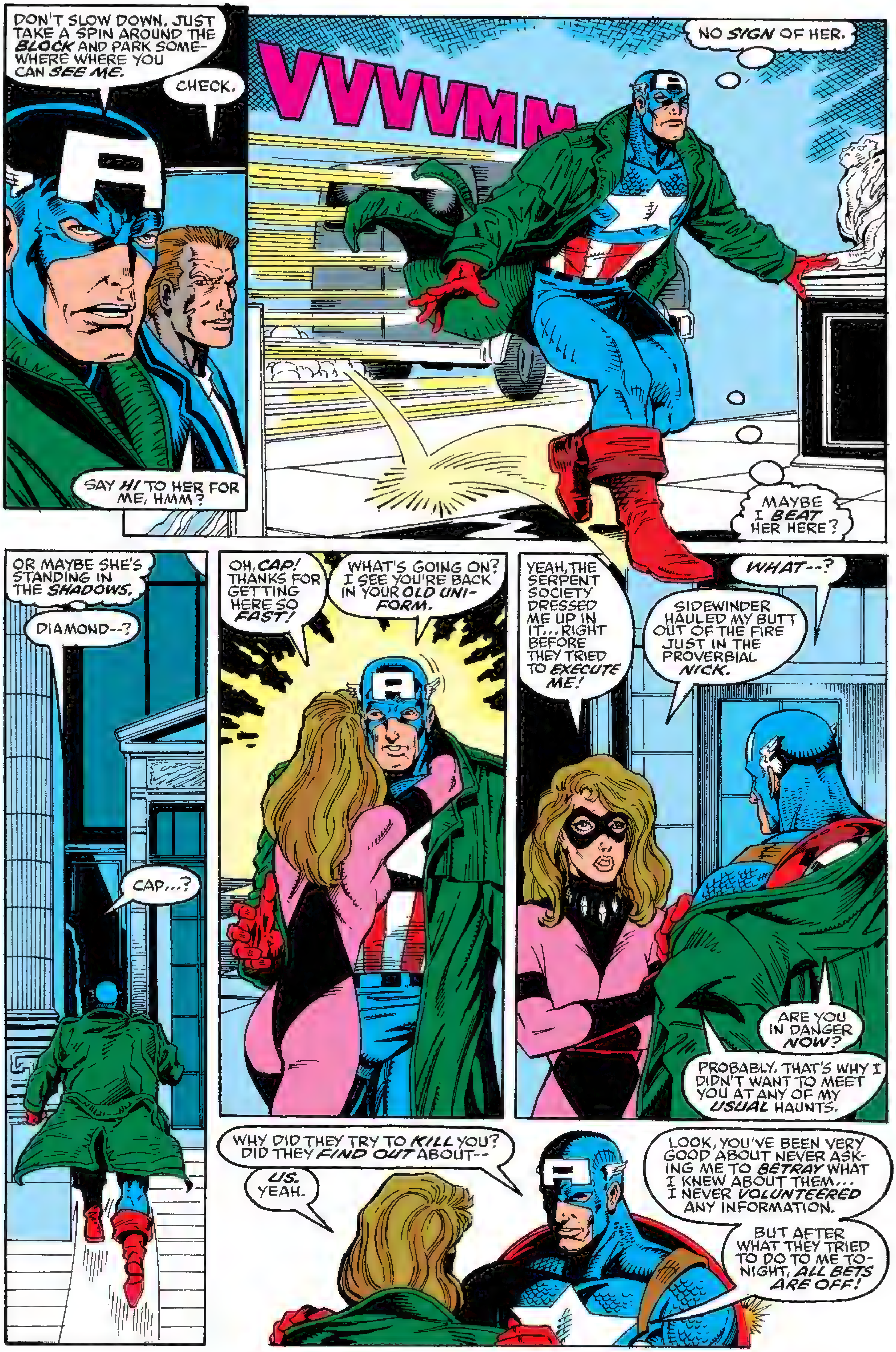
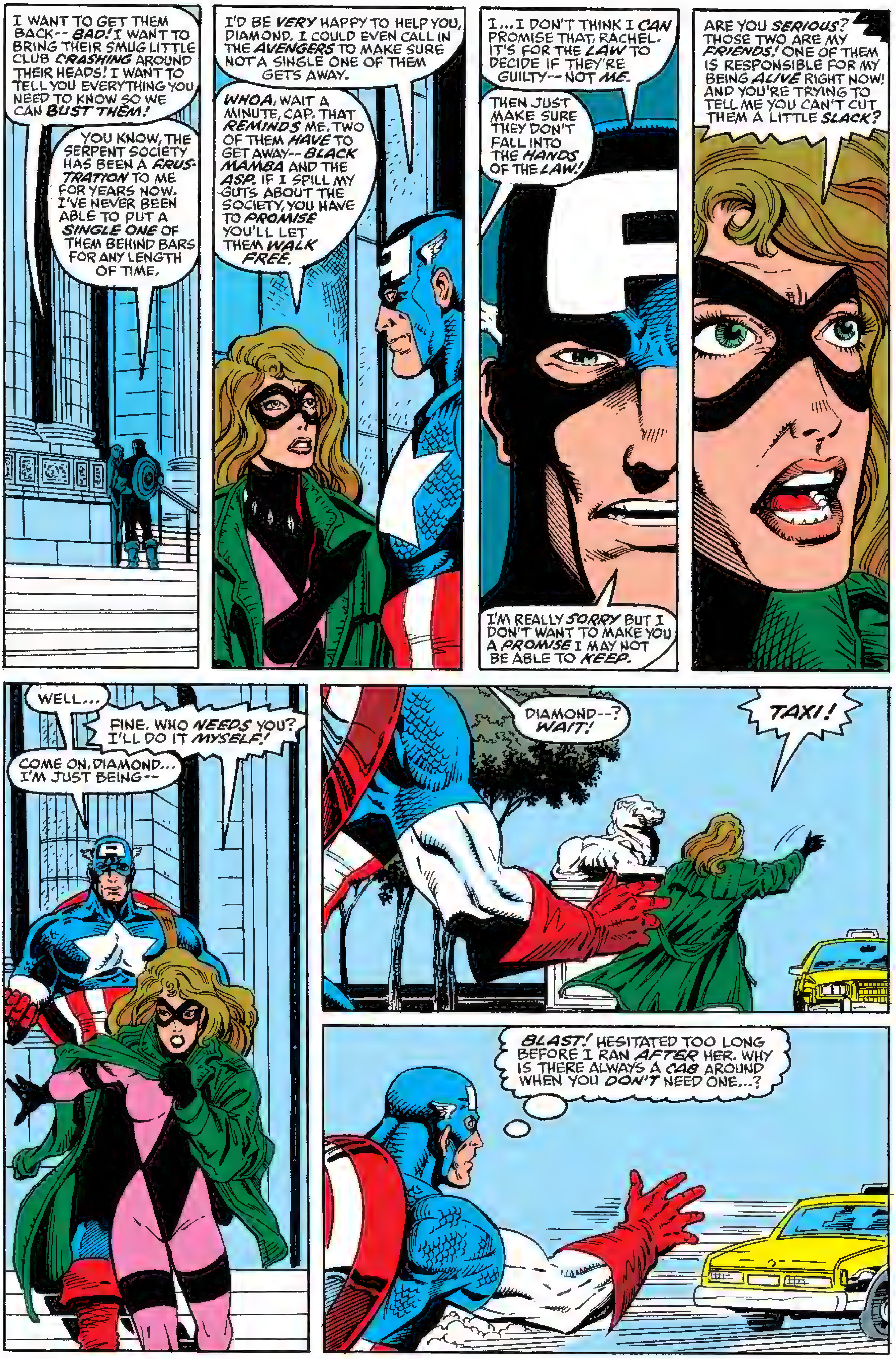
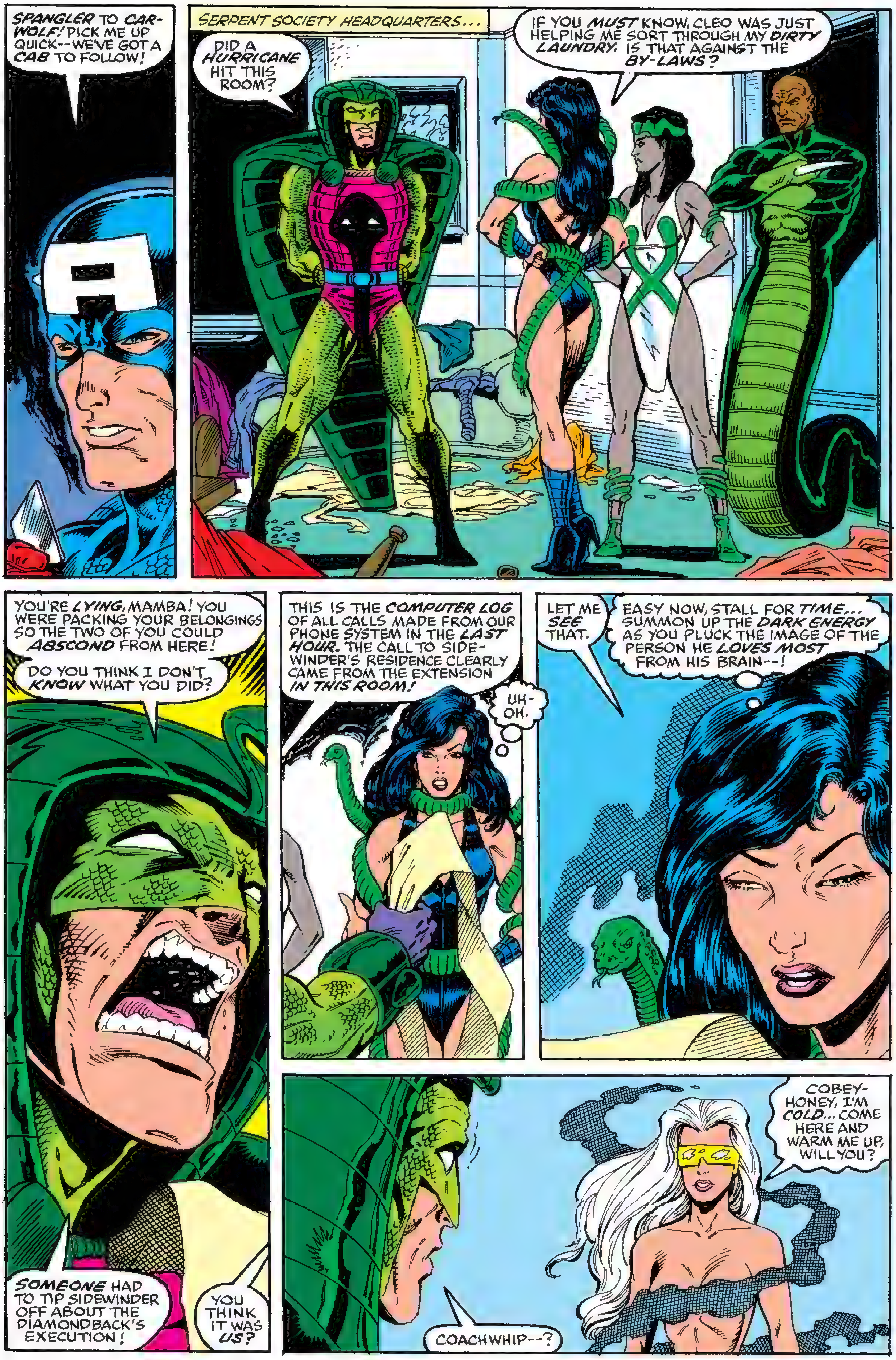

I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH, SIDEWINDER. THOSE BOZOS YOU LEFT IN CHARGE OF THE SERPENT SOCIETY WERE GOING TO EXECUTE ME, CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT?
HOW DID YOU KNOW? YOU MANAGED TO TELEPORT THERE JUST IN THE NICK OF TIME!
I KNOW.
TANYA-- BLACK MAMBA-- CALLED ME.
TANYA! MY GOD, YOU'VE GOT TO GO BACK THERE AND GET HER OUT, TOO! HER LIFE ISN'T GOING TO BE WORTH SQUAT AS SOON AS THEY FINGER HER AS THE SNITCH.
SIDEWINDER--? WHAT'S WRONG?
I HOPE THE DEAR GIRL HAS THE WIT TO GET OUT OF THERE BEFORE THEY ACCUSE HER THEN.
SIDEWINDER?
I CAN INVOLVE MYSELF NO MORE.
BUT TANYA WAS YOUR GIRLFRIEND WHILE YOU WERE THE HEAD OF THE SOCIETY! DOESN'T THAT MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?
YES... BUT WHAT WE HAD IS OVER.
AS IS, I EXPECT NOTHING BUT ILL TO COME OF WHAT I'VE ALREADY DONE THIS NIGHT. I AM CERTAIN THE COBRA WILL SEND PEOPLE HERE TO MY HOME AND THEY WILL VENT THEIR FURY ON MY PROPERTY.
ALL I CAN DO IS PACK MY MOST VALUABLE POSSESSIONS AND GO BEFORE THEY GET HERE.
THESE... THINGS MEAN MORE TO YOU THAN YOUR FRIENDS?
BLACK MAMBA AND I ARE EVEN. SHE WOULD NOT WANT TO BE IN MY DEBT ANYMORE, I ASSURE YOU.
NOW ONCE AGAIN I URGE YOU TO BE ON YOUR WAY. THE COBRA'S STORM-TROOPERS WILL BE HERE ANY MOMENT AND I ASSURE YOU I WILL NOT AID YOU IN ANY WAY AGAIN.
IF YOU WON'T HELP TANYA, I KNOW SOMEONE WHO WILL!
NOW EXCUSE ME, THE STENCH OF COWARDICE IN HERE IS MAKING ME SICK!

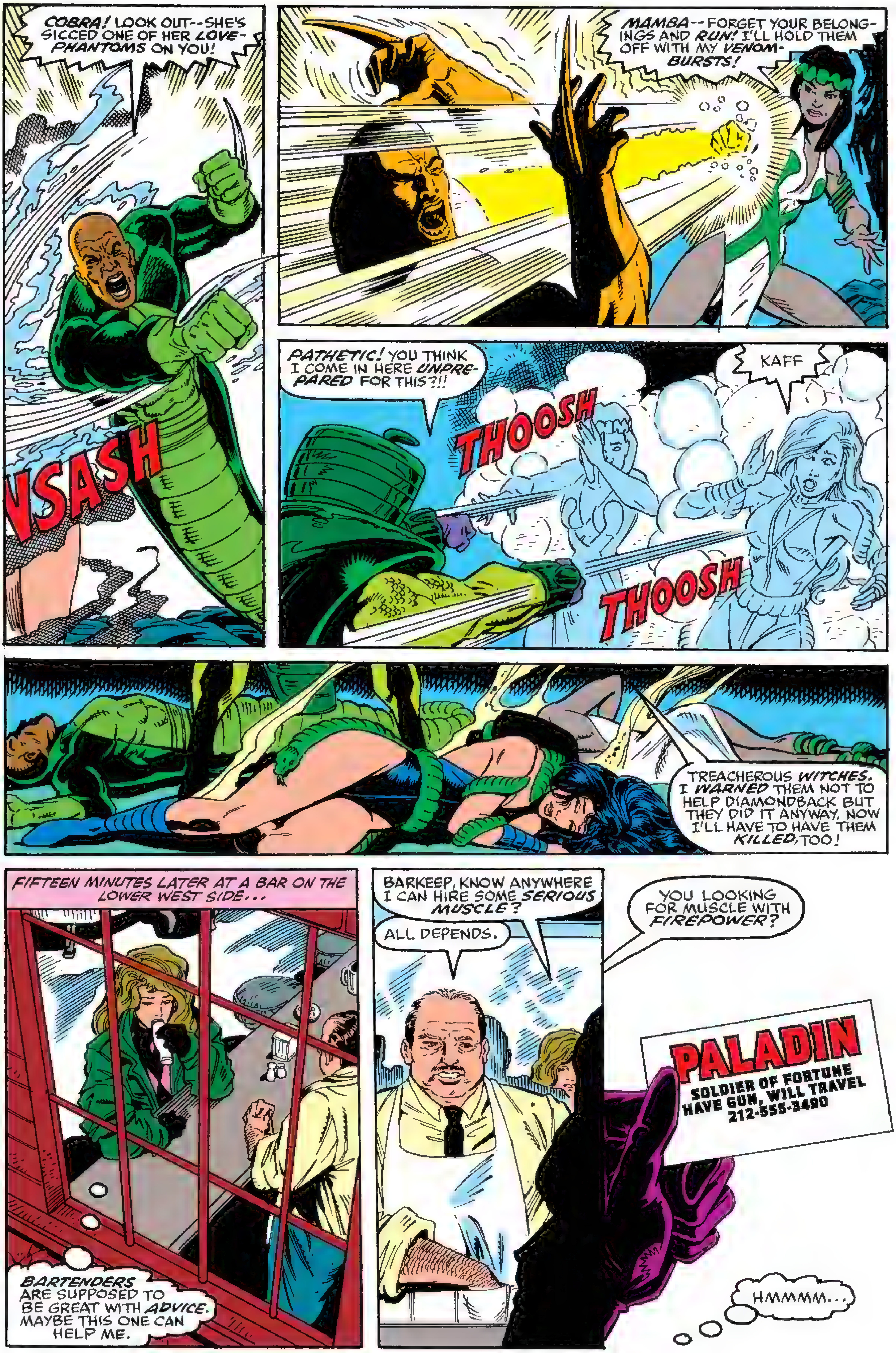

ELSEWHERE AT THAT MOMENT...
DIAMONDBACK AND SIDEWINDER ARE TO BE *TERMINATED ON SIGHT!* A DOUBLE ANNUAL SALARY *BONUS* TO THE PARTY OR PARTIES WHO BRING IN THEIR *CORPSES!*
BLACK RACER-- RATTLER-- COACHWHIP-- GO TO SIDEWINDER'S APARTMENT, SEE IF THEY'VE GONE THERE!
YOU GOT IT, LOVE!
ANACONDA-- PUFF ADDER-- ROCK PYTHON-- GO TO DIAMONDBACK'S APARTMENT!
RIGHT.
FER-DE-LANCE-- COTTONMOUTH-- YOU WILL STAKE OUT THE BACK ENTRANCE TO AVENGERS MANSION IN CASE THAT TURNCOAT TRIES TO SEEK *REFUGE* THERE!
¡SI!
WHAT ABOUT *ME*, COBRA?
THAT'S *KING* COBRA, BLAST IT!
YOU AND I, BUSHMASTER, HAVE SOME *ROGUES* IN THE HOUSE TO ATTEND TO...
COME!

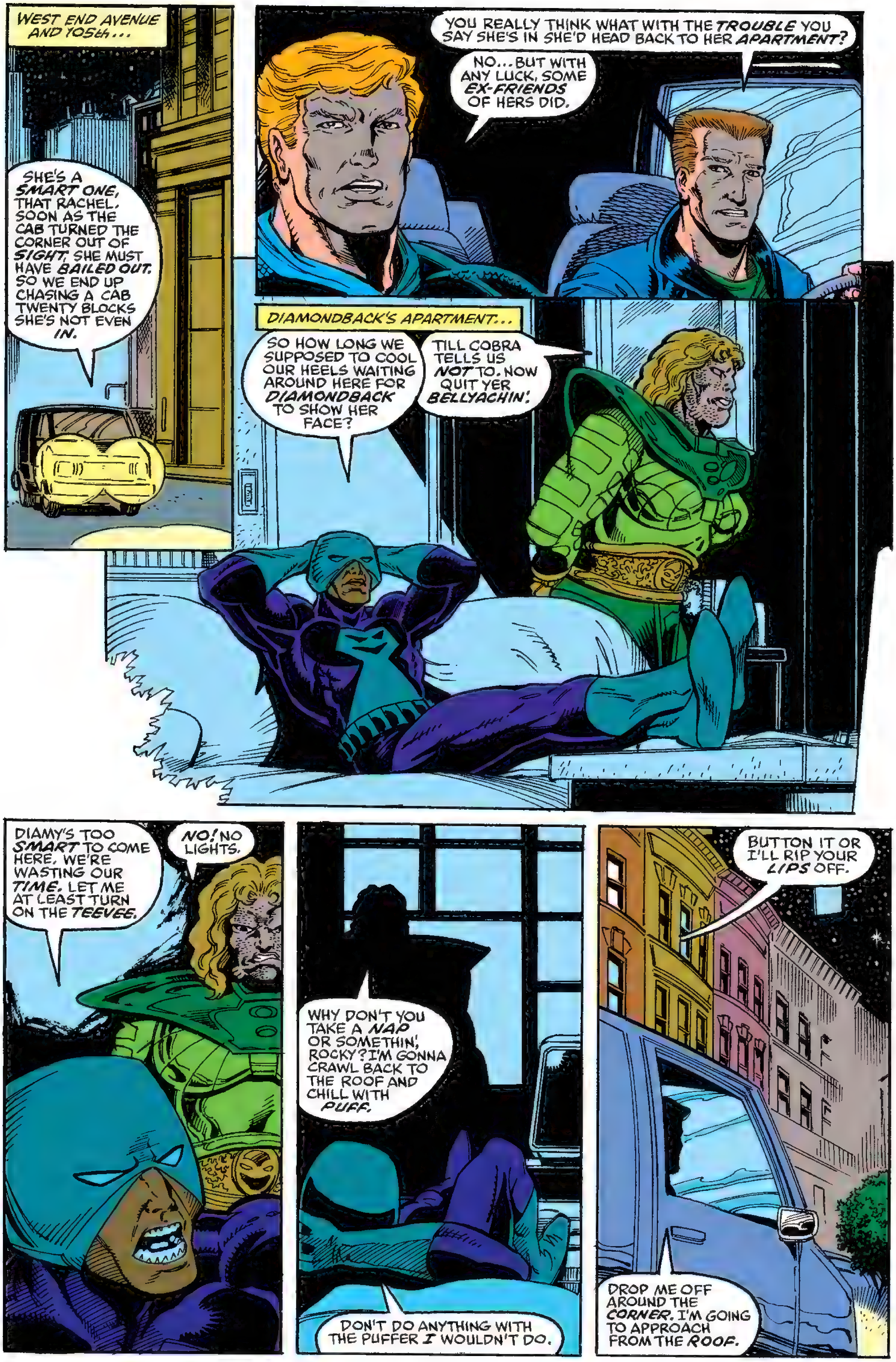

AT THAT MOMENT, AT A DINER FIVE BLOCKS FROM AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS...
...I DON'T KNOW, STEVE. FROM WHAT YOU DESCRIBE IT SOUNDS LIKE THIS OLD GIRLFRIEND OF YOURS WAS COMING ON TO YOU.*
MAYBE. AND I'M NOT SURE WHAT TO THINK ABOUT IT... BERNIE WAS ONE OF THE GREAT LOVES OF MY LIFE. WHEN WE SPLIT UP, IT TOOK ME A LONG TIME TO GET OVER HER.
*READ LAST ISSUE AND YOU BE THE JUDGE. --JURIST RALF
BUT I AM OVER HER, I THINK.
I JUST FEEL KIND OF BAD ABOUT NOT MENTIONING RACHEL TO HER, THAT'S ALL.
WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE YOU AND RACHEL ARE GOING STEADY--OR WHATEVER THE 90s EXPRESSION FOR IT IS--ARE YOU?
NO. BUT...
BDEEP
EXCUSE ME.
ROGERS HERE. WHAT'S UP, MADEMOISELLE?
JUST RECEIVED A CALL FROM RACHEL. SHE SAYS SHE NEEDS TO SEE YOU RIGHT AWAY. IT'S EXTREMELY URGENT.
AVENGERS
SHE'S COMING TO THE MANSION?
NO, SHE WANTS TO MEET YOU IN FRONT OF THE LIBRARY AS SOON AS YOU CAN GET THERE.
GOT IT. THANKS, PEGGY. ROGERS OUT.
THE LIBRARY... AT THIS HOUR?
HATE TO MAKE YOU WOLF DOWN THAT BURGER, JOHN, BUT WE'VE GOT TO RUN.
I'M DONE. BUT I WISH YOU'D USE ANOTHER EXPRESSION THAN "WOLF DOWN."
HMH? OH... YEAH.
THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, FIFTH AVENUE AND 42nd STREET, SEVEN MINUTES LATER...
I'M GETTING THE IMPRESSION THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE SOME SORT OF CLANDESTINE MEETING.

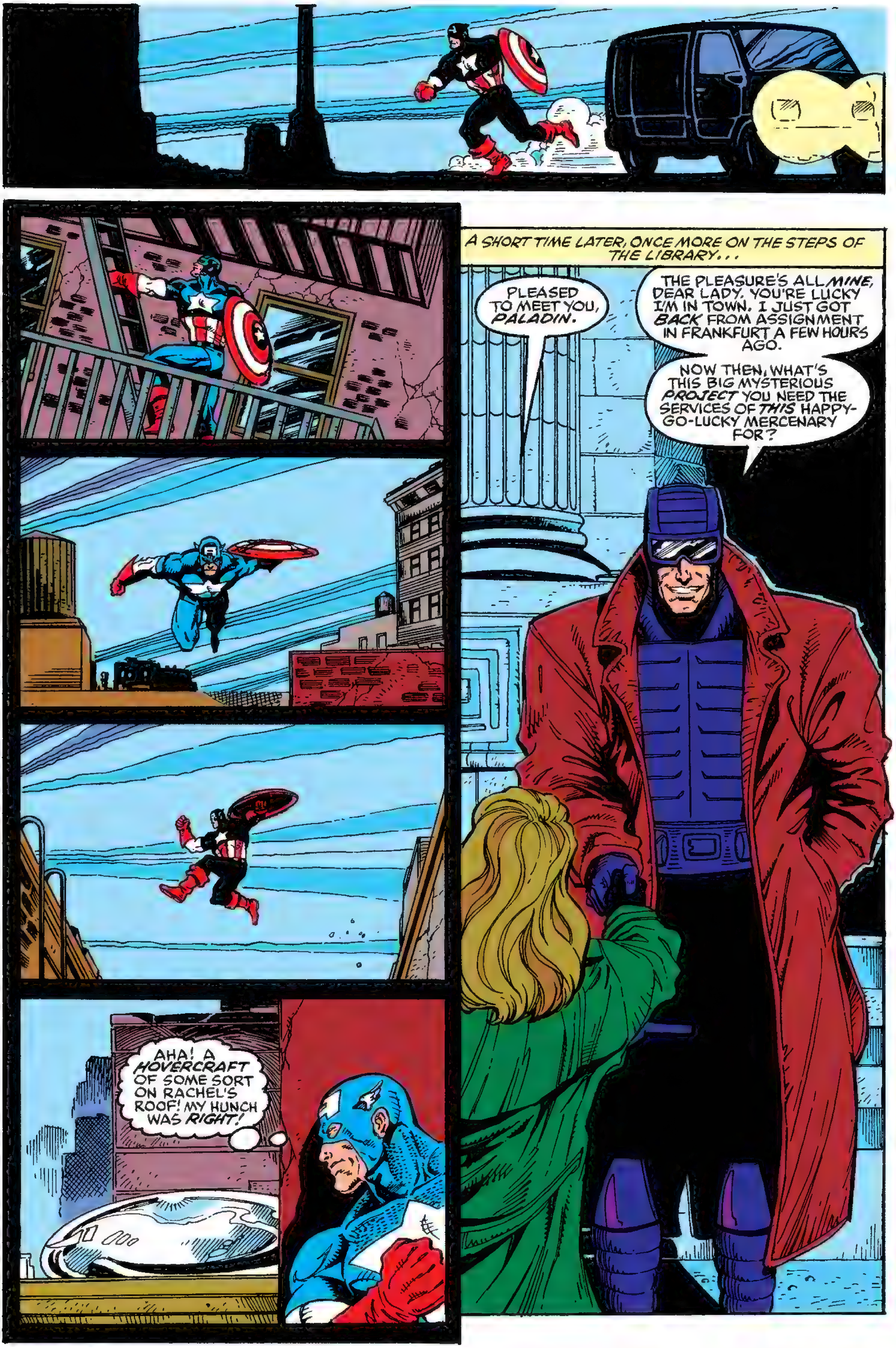

DON'T SLOW DOWN. JUST TAKE A SPIN AROUND THE BLOCK AND PARK SOMEWHERE WHERE YOU CAN SEE ME.
CHECK.
SAY HI TO HER FOR ME, HMM?
VVVVMM
NO SIGN OF HER.
MAYBE I BEAT HER HERE?
OR MAYBE SHE'S STANDING IN THE SHADOWS.
DIAMOND--?
CAP...?
OH, CAP! THANKS FOR GETTING HERE SO FAST!
WHAT'S GOING ON? I SEE YOU'RE BACK IN YOUR OLD UNIFORM.
YEAH, THE SERPENT SOCIETY DRESSED ME UP IN IT... RIGHT BEFORE THEY TRIED TO EXECUTE ME!
WHAT--?
SIDEWINDER HAULED MY BUTT OUT OF THE FIRE JUST IN THE PROVERBIAL NICK.
ARE YOU IN DANGER NOW?
PROBABLY. THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T WANT TO MEET YOU AT ANY OF MY USUAL HAUNTS.
WHY DID THEY TRY TO KILL YOU? DID THEY FIND OUT ABOUT--
US. YEAH.
LOOK, YOU'VE BEEN VERY GOOD ABOUT NEVER ASKING ME TO BETRAY WHAT I KNEW ABOUT THEM... I NEVER VOLUNTEERED ANY INFORMATION.
BUT AFTER WHAT THEY TRIED TO DO TO ME TONIGHT, ALL BETS ARE OFF!

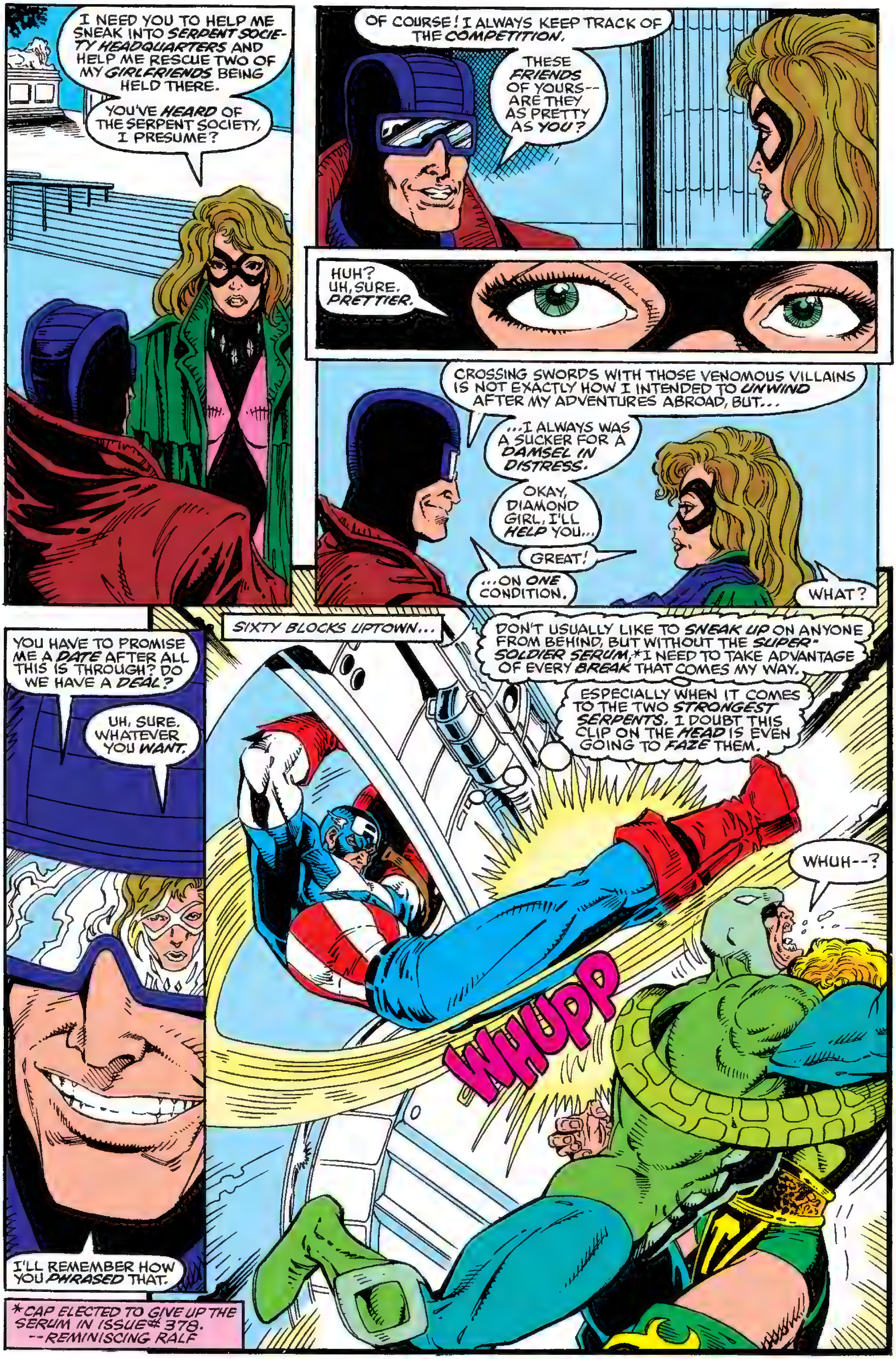

I WANT TO GET THEM BACK-- BAD! I WANT TO BRING THEIR SMUG LITTLE CLUB CRASHING AROUND THEIR HEADS! I WANT TO TELL YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW SO WE CAN BUST THEM!
YOU KNOW, THE SERPENT SOCIETY HAS BEEN A FRUSTRATION TO ME FOR YEARS NOW. I'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO PUT A SINGLE ONE OF THEM BEHIND BARS FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME.
I'D BE VERY HAPPY TO HELP YOU, DIAMOND. I COULD EVEN CALL IN THE AVENGERS TO MAKE SURE NOT A SINGLE ONE OF THEM GETS AWAY.
WHOA, WAIT A MINUTE, CAP. THAT REMINDS ME. TWO OF THEM HAVE TO GET AWAY-- BLACK MAMBA AND THE ASP. IF I SPILL MY GUTS ABOUT THE SOCIETY, YOU HAVE TO PROMISE YOU'LL LET THEM WALK FREE.
I...I DON'T THINK I CAN PROMISE THAT, RACHEL. IT'S FOR THE LAW TO DECIDE IF THEY'RE GUILTY-- NOT ME.
THEN JUST MAKE SURE THEY DON'T FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LAW!
I'M REALLY SORRY BUT I DON'T WANT TO MAKE YOU A PROMISE I MAY NOT BE ABLE TO KEEP.
ARE YOU SERIOUS? THOSE TWO ARE MY FRIENDS! ONE OF THEM IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MY BEING ALIVE RIGHT NOW! AND YOU'RE TRYING TO TELL ME YOU CAN'T CUT THEM A LITTLE SLACK?
WELL...
FINE. WHO NEEDS YOU? I'LL DO IT MYSELF!
COME ON, DIAMOND... I'M JUST BEING--
DIAMOND--? WAIT!
TAXI!
BLAST! HESITATED TOO LONG BEFORE I RAN AFTER HER. WHY IS THERE ALWAYS A CAB AROUND WHEN YOU DON'T NEED ONE...?

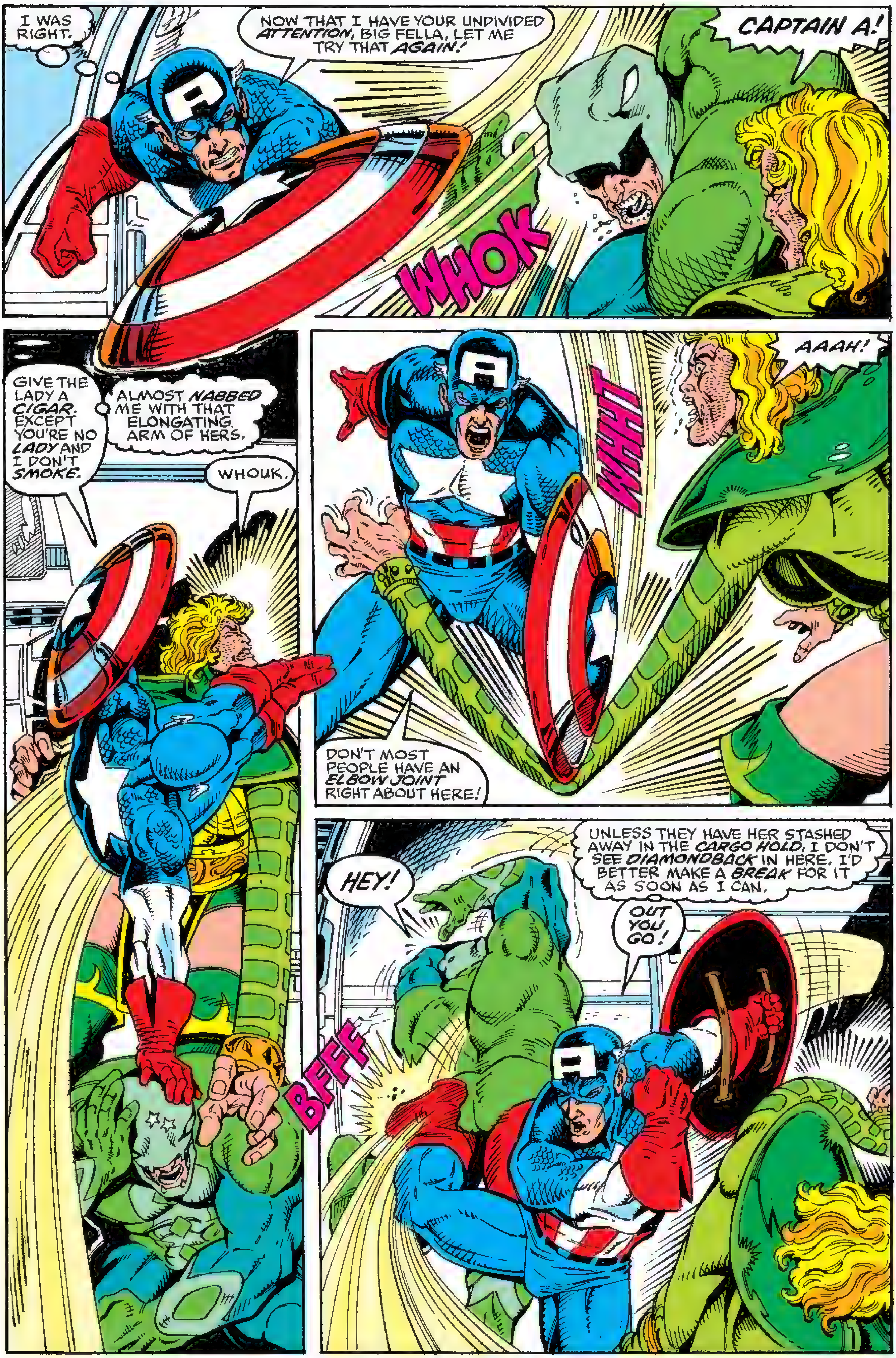

SPANGLER TO CAR-WOLF! PICK ME UP QUICK--WE'VE GOT A CAB TO FOLLOW!
SERPENT SOCIETY HEADQUARTERS...
DID A HURRICANE HIT THIS ROOM?
IF YOU MUST KNOW, CLEO WAS JUST HELPING ME SORT THROUGH MY DIRTY LAUNDRY. IS THAT AGAINST THE BY-LAWS?
YOU'RE LYING, MAMBA! YOU WERE PACKING YOUR BELONGINGS SO THE TWO OF YOU COULD ABSCOND FROM HERE!
DO YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU DID?
SOMEONE HAD TO TIP SIDEWINDER OFF ABOUT THE DIAMONDBACK'S EXECUTION!
YOU THINK IT WAS US?
THIS IS THE COMPUTER LOG OF ALL CALLS MADE FROM OUR PHONE SYSTEM IN THE LAST HOUR. THE CALL TO SIDE-WINDER'S RESIDENCE CLEARLY CAME FROM THE EXTENSION IN THIS ROOM!
UH-OH.
LET ME SEE THAT.
EASY NOW, STALL FOR TIME... SUMMON UP THE DARK ENERGY AS YOU PLUCK THE IMAGE OF THE PERSON HE LOVES MOST FROM HIS BRAIN--!
COBEY-HONEY, I'M COLD... COME HERE AND WARM ME UP, WILL YOU?
COACHWHIP--?

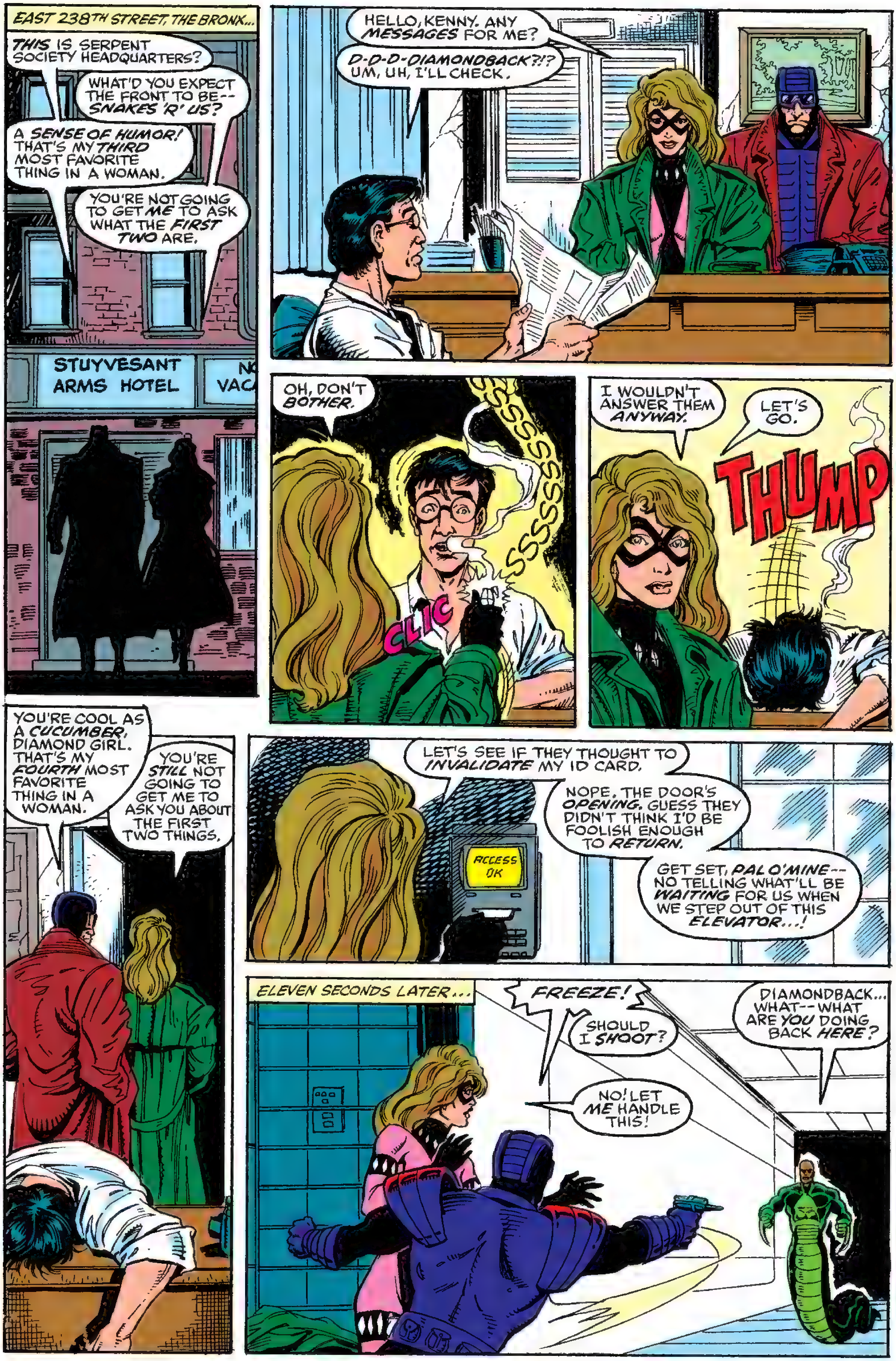

COBRA! LOOK OUT--SHE'S SICCED ONE OF HER LOVE-PHANTOMS ON YOU!
VSASH
MAMBA--FORGET YOUR BELONGINGS AND RUN! I'LL HOLD THEM OFF WITH MY VENOM-BURSTS!
PATHETIC! YOU THINK I COME IN HERE UNPREPARED FOR THIS?!!
KAFF
THOOSH
THOOSH
TREACHEROUS WITCHES. I WARNED THEM NOT TO HELP DIAMONDBACK BUT THEY DID IT ANYWAY. NOW I'LL HAVE TO HAVE THEM KILLED, TOO!
FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER AT A BAR ON THE LOWER WEST SIDE...
BARTENDERS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE GREAT WITH ADVICE. MAYBE THIS ONE CAN HELP ME.
BARKEEP, KNOW ANYWHERE I CAN HIRE SOME SERIOUS MUSCLE?
ALL DEPENDS.
YOU LOOKING FOR MUSCLE WITH FIREPOWER?
PALADIN
SOLDIER OF FORTUNE
HAVE GUN, WILL TRAVEL
212-555-3490
HMMMM...

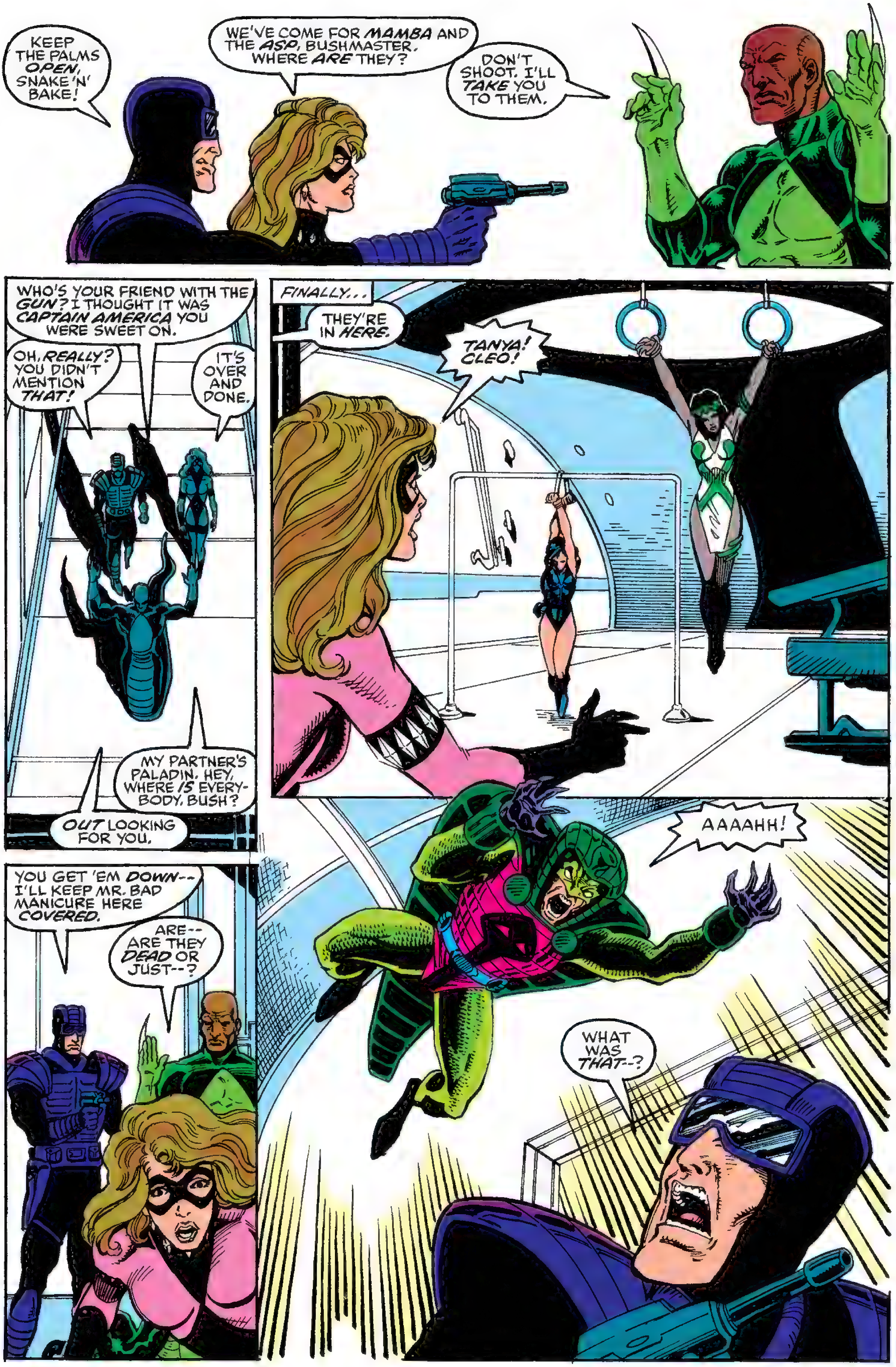

WEST END AVENUE AND 105th...
SHE'S A SMART ONE, THAT RACHEL. SOON AS THE CAB TURNED THE CORNER OUT OF SIGHT, SHE MUST HAVE BAILED OUT. SO WE END UP CHASING A CAB TWENTY BLOCKS SHE'S NOT EVEN IN.
YOU REALLY THINK WHAT WITH THE TROUBLE YOU SAY SHE'S IN SHE'D HEAD BACK TO HER APARTMENT?
NO... BUT WITH ANY LUCK, SOME EX-FRIENDS OF HERS DID.
DIAMONDBACK'S APARTMENT...
SO HOW LONG WE SUPPOSED TO COOL OUR HEELS WAITING AROUND HERE FOR DIAMONDBACK TO SHOW HER FACE?
TILL COBRA TELLS US NOT TO. NOW QUIT YER BELLYACHIN'.
DIAMY'S TOO SMART TO COME HERE. WE'RE WASTING OUR TIME. LET ME AT LEAST TURN ON THE TEEVEE.
NO! NO LIGHTS.
WHY DON'T YOU TAKE A NAP OR SOMETHIN', ROCKY? I'M GONNA CRAWL BACK TO THE ROOF AND CHILL WITH PUFF.
DON'T DO ANYTHING WITH THE PUFFER I WOULDN'T DO.
BUTTON IT OR I'LL RIP YOUR LIPS OFF.
DROP ME OFF AROUND THE CORNER. I'M GOING TO APPROACH FROM THE ROOF.

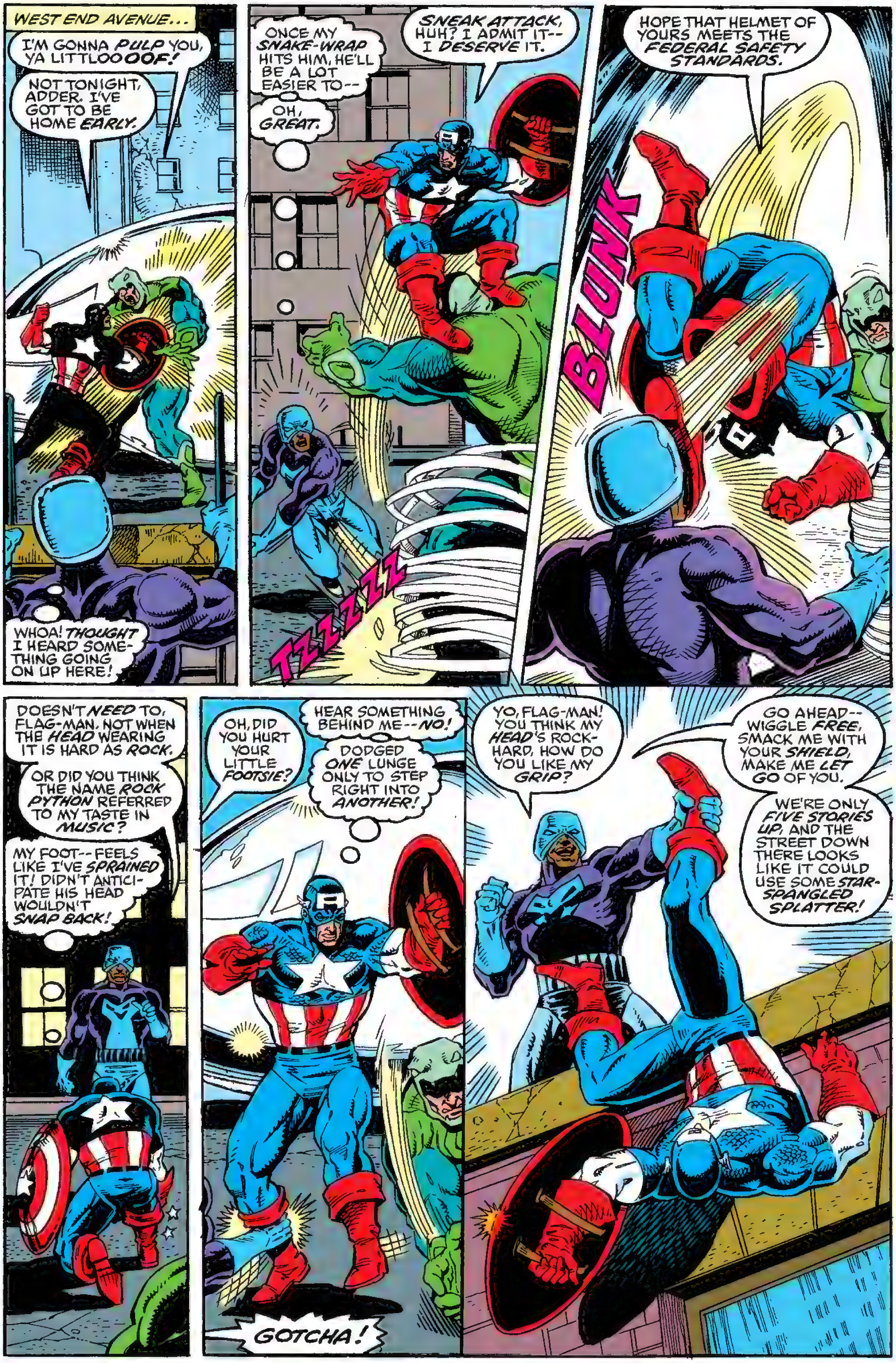

A SHORT TIME LATER, ONCE MORE ON THE STEPS OF THE LIBRARY...
PLEASED TO MEET YOU, PALADIN.
THE PLEASURE'S ALL MINE, DEAR LADY. YOU'RE LUCKY I'M IN TOWN. I JUST GOT BACK FROM ASSIGNMENT IN FRANKFURT A FEW HOURS AGO.
NOW THEN, WHAT'S THIS BIG MYSTERIOUS PROJECT YOU NEED THE SERVICES OF THIS HAPPY-GO-LUCKY MERCENARY FOR?
AHA! A HOVERCRAFT OF SOME SORT ON RACHEL'S ROOF! MY HUNCH WAS RIGHT!


I NEED YOU TO HELP ME SNEAK INTO *SERPENT SOCIETY HEADQUARTERS* AND HELP ME RESCUE TWO OF MY *GIRLFRIENDS* BEING HELD THERE.
YOU'VE *HEARD* OF THE SERPENT SOCIETY, I PRESUME?
OF COURSE! I ALWAYS KEEP TRACK OF THE *COMPETITION*.
THESE *FRIENDS* OF YOURS-- ARE THEY AS PRETTY AS *YOU*?
HUH? UH, SURE. *PRETTIER*.
CROSSING SWORDS WITH THOSE VENOMOUS VILLAINS IS NOT EXACTLY HOW I INTENDED TO *UNWIND* AFTER MY ADVENTURES ABROAD, BUT...
...I ALWAYS WAS A SUCKER FOR A *DAMSEL IN DISTRESS*.
OKAY, DIAMOND GIRL, I'LL *HELP* YOU...
GREAT!
...ON *ONE* CONDITION.
WHAT?
YOU HAVE TO PROMISE ME A *DATE* AFTER ALL THIS IS THROUGH? DO WE HAVE A *DEAL*?
UH, SURE. WHATEVER YOU *WANT*.
I'LL REMEMBER HOW YOU *PHRASED* THAT.
*CAP ELECTED TO GIVE UP THE SERUM IN ISSUE# 378. --REMINISCING RALF
SIXTY BLOCKS UPTOWN...
DON'T USUALLY LIKE TO *SNEAK UP* ON ANYONE FROM BEHIND, BUT WITHOUT THE *SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM*,* I NEED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EVERY *BREAK* THAT COMES MY WAY.
ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO THE TWO *STRONGEST SERPENTS*. I DOUBT THIS CLIP ON THE *HEAD* IS EVEN GOING TO *FAZE* THEM.
WHUPP
WHUH--?

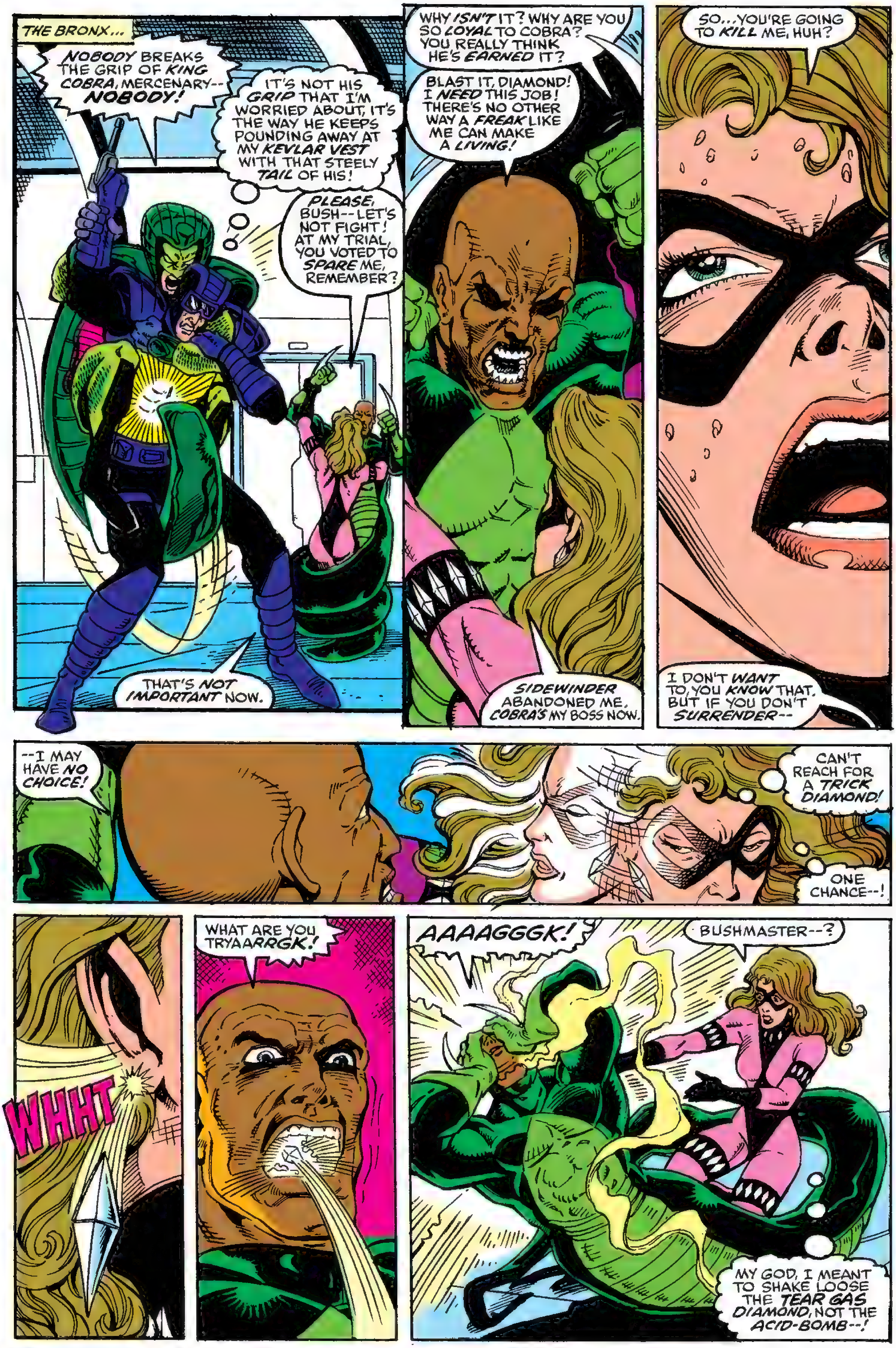

I WAS RIGHT.
NOW THAT I HAVE YOUR UNDIVIDED *ATTENTION*, BIG FELLA, LET ME TRY THAT *AGAIN!*
CAPTAIN A!
WHOK
GIVE THE LADY A *CIGAR*. EXCEPT YOU'RE NO *LADY* AND I DON'T *SMOKE*.
ALMOST *NABBED* ME WITH THAT ELONGATING ARM OF HERS.
WHOUK.
AAAH!
WHHT
DON'T MOST PEOPLE HAVE AN *ELBOW JOINT* RIGHT ABOUT HERE!
UNLESS THEY HAVE HER STASHED AWAY IN THE *CARGO HOLD*, I DON'T SEE *DIAMONDBACK* IN HERE. I'D BETTER MAKE A *BREAK* FOR IT AS SOON AS I CAN.
HEY!
OUT YOU GO!
BFFF

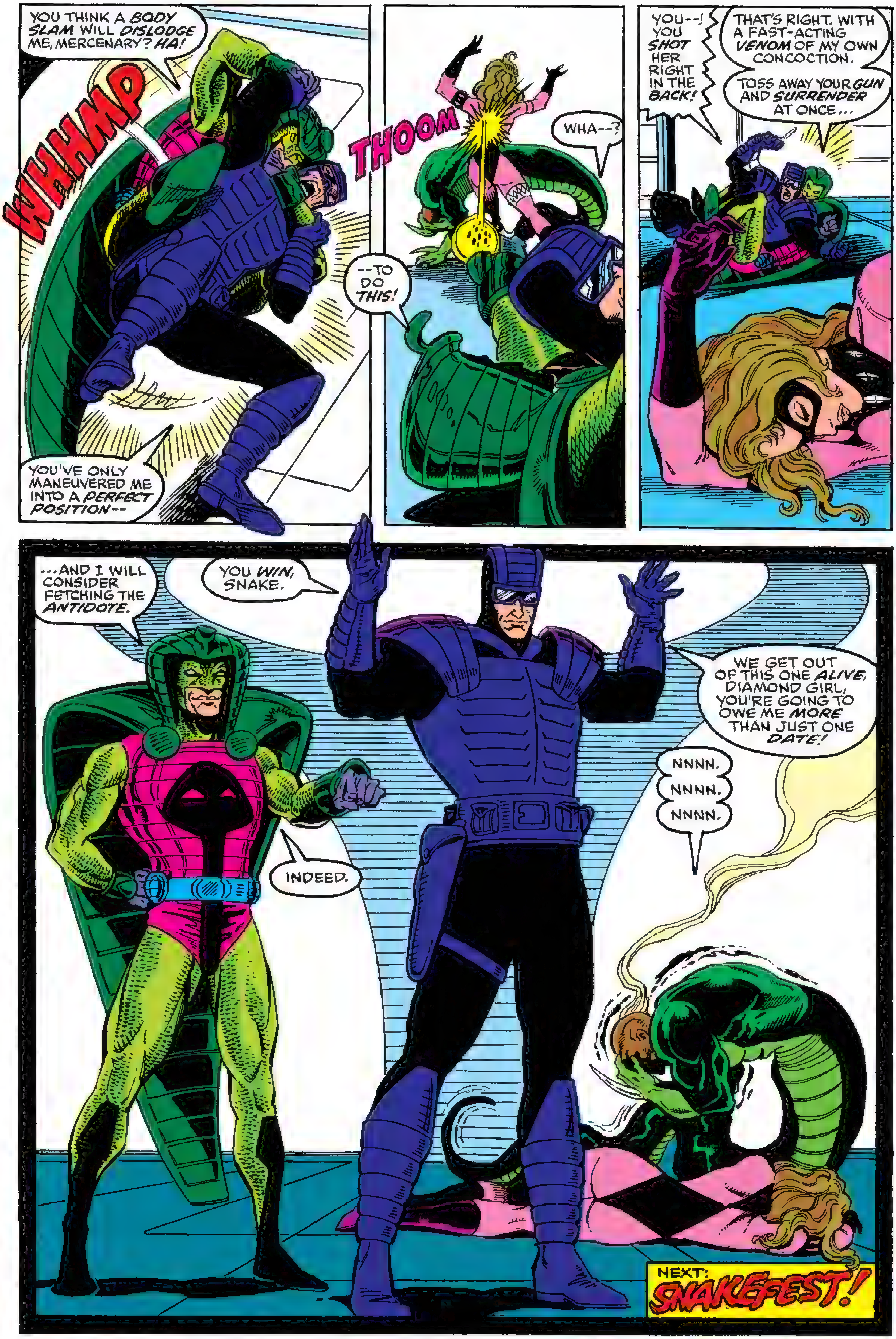

EAST 238TH STREET, THE BRONX...
THIS IS SERPENT SOCIETY HEADQUARTERS?
WHAT'D YOU EXPECT THE FRONT TO BE--SNAKES 'R' US?
A SENSE OF HUMOR! THAT'S MY THIRD MOST FAVORITE THING IN A WOMAN.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET ME TO ASK WHAT THE FIRST TWO ARE.
STUYVESANT ARMS HOTEL
N VAC
HELLO, KENNY. ANY MESSAGES FOR ME?
D-D-D-DIAMONDBACK?!? UM, UH, I'LL CHECK.
OH, DON'T BOTHER.
SSSSSSSS
CLIC
I WOULDN'T ANSWER THEM ANYWAY.
LET'S GO.
THUMP
YOU'RE COOL AS A CUCUMBER, DIAMOND GIRL. THAT'S MY FOURTH MOST FAVORITE THING IN A WOMAN.
YOU'RE STILL NOT GOING TO GET ME TO ASK YOU ABOUT THE FIRST TWO THINGS.
LET'S SEE IF THEY THOUGHT TO INVALIDATE MY ID CARD.
ACCESS OK
NOPE. THE DOOR'S OPENING. GUESS THEY DIDN'T THINK I'D BE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO RETURN.
GET SET, PAL O'MINE-- NO TELLING WHAT'LL BE WAITING FOR US WHEN WE STEP OUT OF THIS ELEVATOR...!
ELEVEN SECONDS LATER...
FREEZE!
SHOULD I SHOOT?
DIAMONDBACK... WHAT--WHAT ARE YOU DOING BACK HERE?
NO! LET ME HANDLE THIS!


KEEP THE PALMS *OPEN*, SNAKE 'N' BAKE!
WE'VE COME FOR *MAMBA* AND THE *ASP*, BUSHMASTER. WHERE *ARE* THEY?
DON'T SHOOT. I'LL *TAKE* YOU TO THEM.
WHO'S YOUR FRIEND WITH THE *GUN?* I THOUGHT IT WAS *CAPTAIN AMERICA* YOU WERE SWEET ON.
OH, *REALLY?* YOU DIDN'T MENTION *THAT!*
IT'S OVER AND DONE.
MY PARTNER'S PALADIN. HEY, WHERE *IS* EVERYBODY, BUSH?
OUT LOOKING FOR YOU.
FINALLY...
THEY'RE IN *HERE*.
TANYA! CLEO!
YOU GET 'EM *DOWN*-- I'LL KEEP MR. BAD MANICURE HERE *COVERED*.
ARE-- ARE THEY *DEAD* OR JUST--?
AAAAHH!
WHAT WAS *THAT*--?



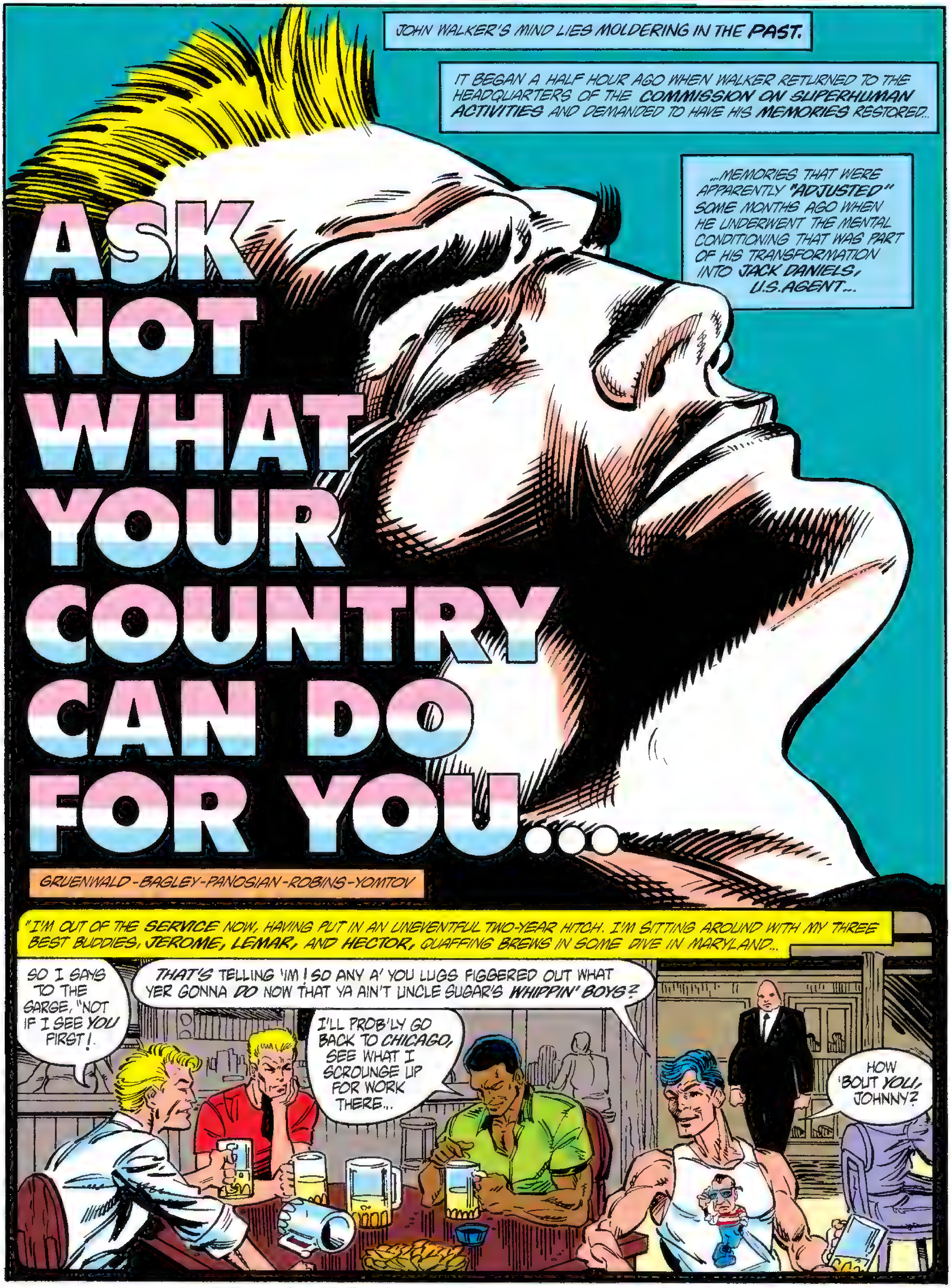
WEST END AVENUE...
I'M GONNA PULP YOU, YA LITTLOOOOOF!
NOT TONIGHT, ADDER. I'VE GOT TO BE HOME EARLY.
WHOA! THOUGHT I HEARD SOMETHING GOING ON UP HERE!
ONCE MY SNAKE-WRAP HITS HIM, HE'LL BE A LOT EASIER TO--
OH, GREAT.
SNEAK ATTACK, HUH? I ADMIT IT-- I DESERVE IT.
TZZZZZ
HOPE THAT HELMET OF YOURS MEETS THE FEDERAL SAFETY STANDARDS.
BLUNK
DOESN'T NEED TO, FLAG-MAN. NOT WHEN THE HEAD WEARING IT IS HARD AS ROCK.
OR DID YOU THINK THE NAME ROCK PYTHON REFERRED TO MY TASTE IN MUSIC?
MY FOOT--FEELS LIKE I'VE SPRAINED IT! DIDN'T ANTICIPATE HIS HEAD WOULDN'T SNAP BACK!
OH, DID YOU HURT YOUR LITTLE FOOTSIE?
HEAR SOMETHING BEHIND ME--NO!
DODGED ONE LUNGE ONLY TO STEP RIGHT INTO ANOTHER!
GOTCHA!
YO, FLAG-MAN! YOU THINK MY HEAD'S ROCK-HARD, HOW DO YOU LIKE MY GRIP?
GO AHEAD-- WIGGLE FREE, SMACK ME WITH YOUR SHIELD, MAKE ME LET GO OF YOU.
WE'RE ONLY FIVE STORIES UP, AND THE STREET DOWN THERE LOOKS LIKE IT COULD USE SOME STAR-SPANGLED SPLATTER!

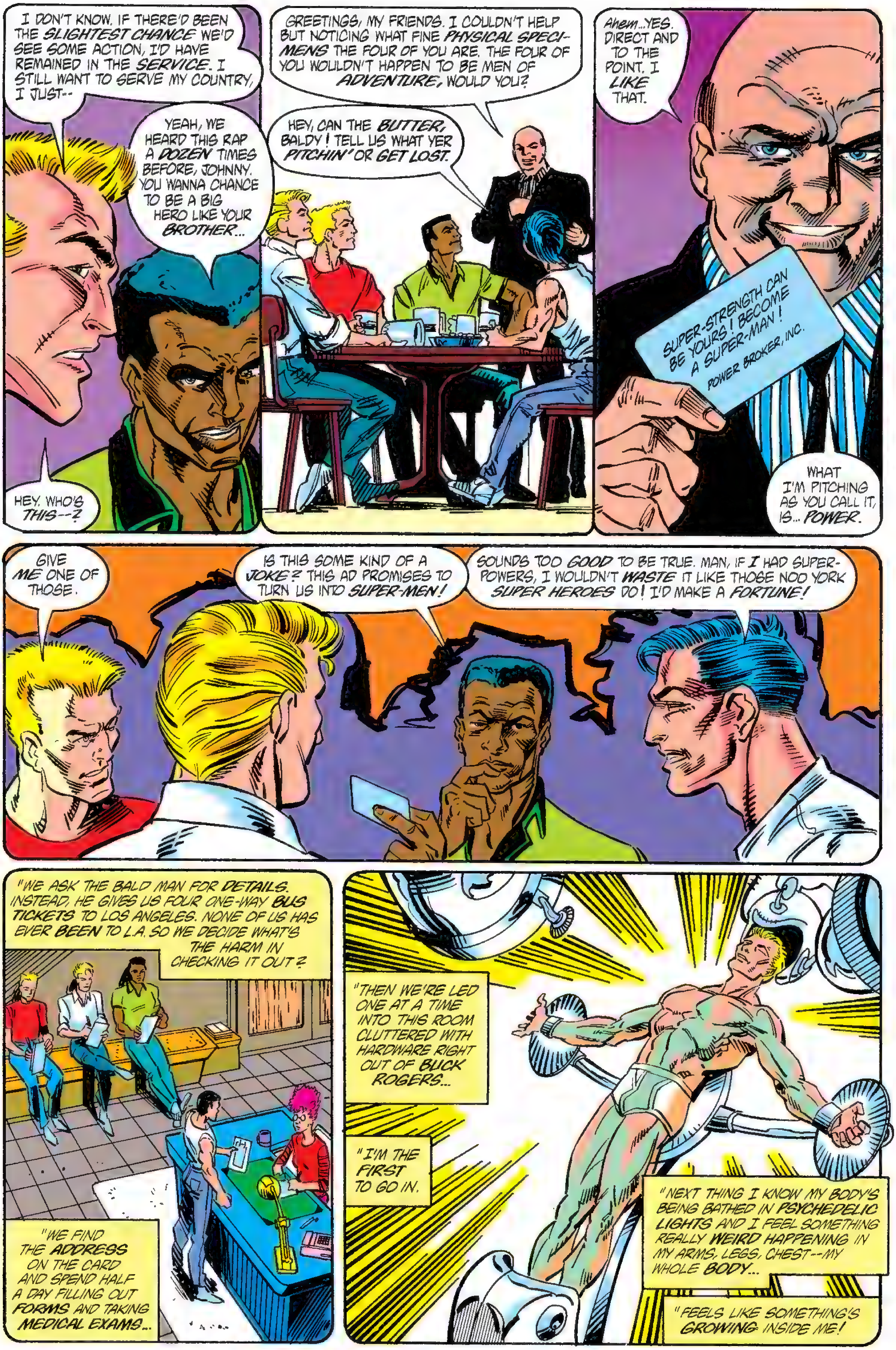

THE BRONX...
NOBODY BREAKS THE GRIP OF KING COBRA, MERCENARY-- NOBODY!
IT'S NOT HIS GRIP THAT I'M WORRIED ABOUT, IT'S THE WAY HE KEEPS POUNDING AWAY AT MY KEVLAR VEST WITH THAT STEELY TAIL OF HIS!
PLEASE, BUSH--LET'S NOT FIGHT! AT MY TRIAL, YOU VOTED TO SPARE ME, REMEMBER?
THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT NOW.
WHY ISN'T IT? WHY ARE YOU SO LOYAL TO COBRA? YOU REALLY THINK HE'S EARNED IT?
BLAST IT, DIAMOND! I NEED THIS JOB! THERE'S NO OTHER WAY A FREAK LIKE ME CAN MAKE A LIVING!
SIDEWINDER ABANDONED ME. COBRA'S MY BOSS NOW.
SO...YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME, HUH?
I DON'T WANT TO, YOU KNOW THAT. BUT IF YOU DON'T SURRENDER--
--I MAY HAVE NO CHOICE!
CAN'T REACH FOR A TRICK DIAMOND!
ONE CHANCE--!
WHHT
WHAT ARE YOU TRYAARRGK!
AAAAGGGK!
BUSHMASTER--?
MY GOD, I MEANT TO SHAKE LOOSE THE TEAR GAS DIAMOND, NOT THE ACID-BOMB--!

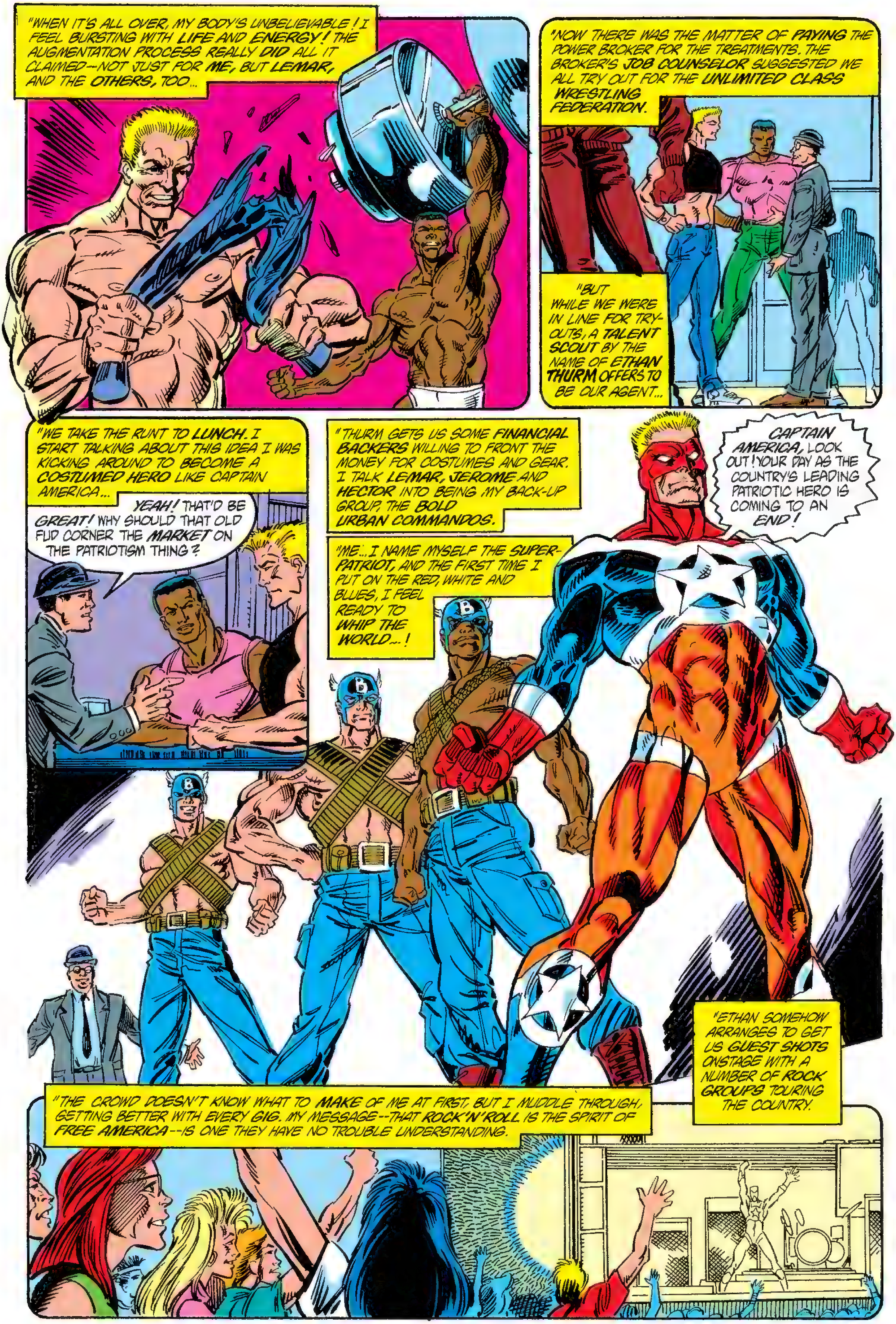

YOU THINK A BODY SLAM WILL DISLODGE ME, MERCENARY? HA!
WHHMP
YOU'VE ONLY MANEUVERED ME INTO A PERFECT POSITION--
THOOM
--TO DO THIS!
WHA--?
YOU--! YOU SHOT HER RIGHT IN THE BACK!
THAT'S RIGHT. WITH A FAST-ACTING VENOM OF MY OWN CONCOCTION.
TOSS AWAY YOUR GUN AND SURRENDER AT ONCE...
...AND I WILL CONSIDER FETCHING THE ANTIDOTE.
YOU WIN, SNAKE.
INDEED.
WE GET OUT OF THIS ONE ALIVE, DIAMOND GIRL, YOU'RE GOING TO OWE ME MORE THAN JUST ONE DATE!
NNNN. NNNN. NNNN.
NEXT: SNAKEFEST!

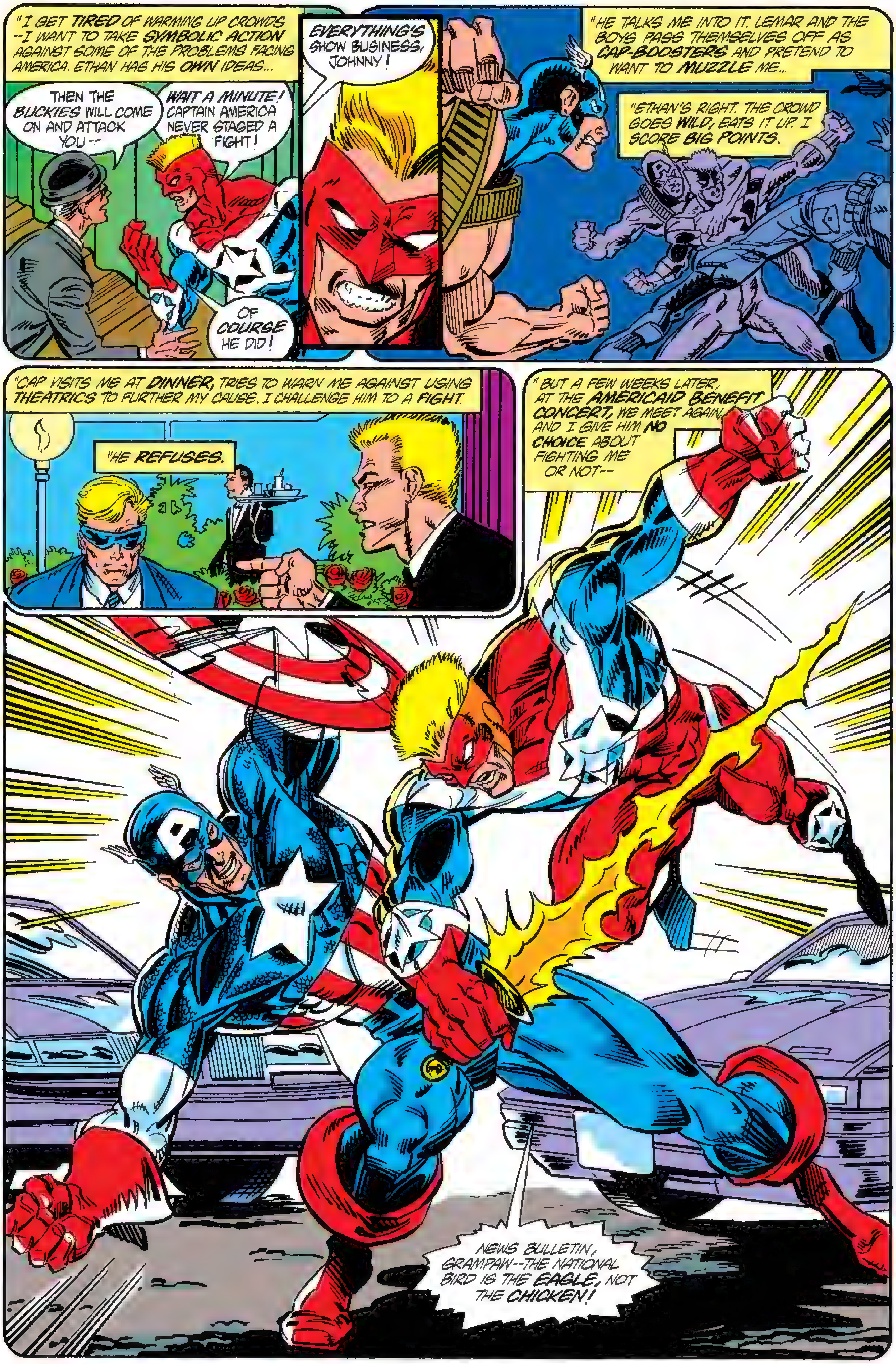
WHEN THE GOVERNMENT FORCED CAPTAIN AMERICA TO RESIGN, THERE WAS ONE MAN THEY DEEMED FIT TO REPLACE HIM. HIS NAME WAS JOHN WALKER, AND HE BROUGHT HIS OWN BRAND OF PATRIOTISM TO THE JOB. WITH CAP'S RETURN, THE STRENGTH-AUGMENTED SUPER-PATRIOT ASSUMED A NEW GUISE, BECOMING THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S FOREMOST COSTUMED OPERATIVE! STAN LEE PRESENTS . . .

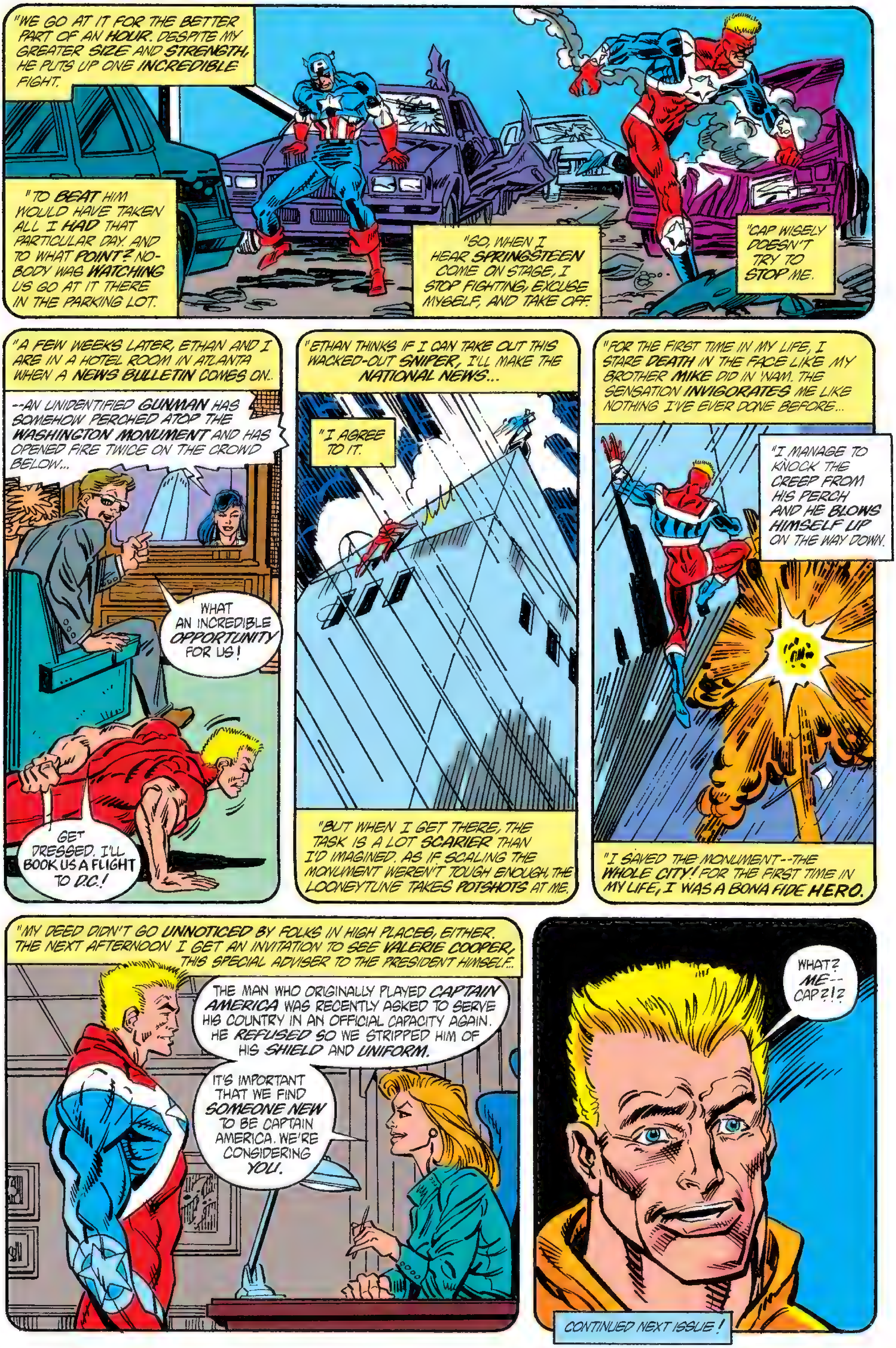
U.S.AGENT!


JOHN WALKER'S MIND LIES MOLDERING IN THE PAST.
IT BEGAN A HALF HOUR AGO WHEN WALKER RETURNED TO THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMMISSION ON SUPERHUMAN ACTIVITIES AND DEMANDED TO HAVE HIS MEMORIES RESTORED...
...MEMORIES THAT WERE APPARENTLY "ADJUSTED" SOME MONTHS AGO WHEN HE UNDERWENT THE MENTAL CONDITIONING THAT WAS PART OF HIS TRANSFORMATION INTO JACK DANIELS, U.S.AGENT...
ASK NOT WHAT YOUR COUNTRY CAN DO FOR YOU...
GRUENWALD-BAGLEY-PANOSIAN-ROBINS-YOMTOV
"I'M OUT OF THE SERVICE NOW, HAVING PUT IN AN UNEVENTFUL TWO-YEAR HITCH. I'M SITTING AROUND WITH MY THREE BEST BUDDIES, JEROME, LEMAR, AND HECTOR, QUAFFING BREWS IN SOME DIVE IN MARYLAND...
SO I SAYS TO THE SARGE, "NOT IF I SEE YOU FIRST!
THAT'S TELLING 'IM! SO ANY A' YOU LUGS FIGGERED OUT WHAT YER GONNA DO NOW THAT YA AIN'T UNCLE SUGAR'S WHIPPIN' BOYS?
I'LL PROB'LY GO BACK TO CHICAGO, SEE WHAT I SCROUNGE UP FOR WORK THERE...
HOW 'BOUT YOU, JOHNNY?


I DON'T KNOW. IF THERE'D BEEN THE SLIGHTEST CHANCE WE'D SEE SOME ACTION, I'D HAVE REMAINED IN THE SERVICE. I STILL WANT TO SERVE MY COUNTRY, I JUST--
YEAH, WE HEARD THIS RAP A DOZEN TIMES BEFORE, JOHNNY. YOU WANNA CHANCE TO BE A BIG HERO LIKE YOUR BROTHER...
HEY. WHO'S THIS--?
GREETINGS, MY FRIENDS. I COULDN'T HELP BUT NOTICING WHAT FINE PHYSICAL SPECIMENS THE FOUR OF YOU ARE. THE FOUR OF YOU WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO BE MEN OF ADVENTURE, WOULD YOU?
HEY, CAN THE BUTTER, BALDY! TELL US WHAT YER PITCHIN' OR GET LOST.
Ahem...YES. DIRECT AND TO THE POINT. I LIKE THAT.
SUPER-STRENGTH CAN BE YOURS! BECOME A SUPER-MAN! POWER BROKER, INC.
WHAT I'M PITCHING AS YOU CALL IT, IS... POWER.
GIVE ME ONE OF THOSE.
IS THIS SOME KIND OF A JOKE? THIS AD PROMISES TO TURN US INTO SUPER-MEN!
SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE. MAN, IF I HAD SUPER-POWERS, I WOULDN'T WASTE IT LIKE THOSE NOO YORK SUPER HEROES DO! I'D MAKE A FORTUNE!
"WE ASK THE BALD MAN FOR DETAILS. INSTEAD, HE GIVES US FOUR ONE-WAY BUS TICKETS TO LOS ANGELES. NONE OF US HAS EVER BEEN TO L.A. SO WE DECIDE WHAT'S THE HARM IN CHECKING IT OUT?
"WE FIND THE ADDRESS ON THE CARD AND SPEND HALF A DAY FILLING OUT FORMS AND TAKING MEDICAL EXAMS...
"THEN WE'RE LED ONE AT A TIME INTO THIS ROOM CLUTTERED WITH HARDWARE RIGHT OUT OF BUCK ROGERS...
"I'M THE FIRST TO GO IN.
"NEXT THING I KNOW MY BODY'S BEING BATHED IN PSYCHEDELIC LIGHTS AND I FEEL SOMETHING REALLY WEIRD HAPPENING IN MY ARMS, LEGS, CHEST--MY WHOLE BODY...
"FEELS LIKE SOMETHING'S GROWING INSIDE ME!


"WHEN IT'S ALL OVER, MY BODY'S UNBELIEVABLE! I FEEL BURSTING WITH **LIFE AND ENERGY!** THE AUGMENTATION PROCESS REALLY **DID** ALL IT CLAIMED--NOT JUST FOR **ME,** BUT **LEMAR,** AND THE **OTHERS,** TOO...
"NOW THERE WAS THE MATTER OF **PAYING** THE POWER BROKER FOR THE TREATMENTS. THE BROKER'S **JOB COUNSELOR** SUGGESTED WE ALL TRY OUT FOR THE **UNLIMITED CLASS WRESTLING FEDERATION.**
"BUT WHILE WE WERE IN LINE FOR TRY-OUTS, A **TALENT SCOUT** BY THE NAME OF **ETHAN THURM** OFFERS TO BE OUR AGENT...
"WE TAKE THE RUNT TO **LUNCH.** I START TALKING ABOUT THIS IDEA I WAS KICKING AROUND TO **BECOME A COSTUMED HERO** LIKE CAPTAIN AMERICA...
YEAH! THAT'D BE **GREAT!** WHY SHOULD THAT OLD FUD CORNER THE **MARKET** ON THE PATRIOTISM THING?
"THURM GETS US SOME **FINANCIAL BACKERS** WILLING TO FRONT THE MONEY FOR COSTUMES AND GEAR. I TALK **LEMAR, JEROME** AND **HECTOR** INTO BEING MY BACK-UP GROUP, THE **BOLD URBAN COMMANDOS.**
"ME...I NAME MYSELF THE **SUPER-PATRIOT,** AND THE FIRST TIME I PUT ON THE RED, WHITE AND BLUES, I FEEL READY TO **WHIP THE WORLD...!**
CAPTAIN AMERICA, LOOK OUT! YOUR DAY AS THE COUNTRY'S LEADING PATRIOTIC HERO IS COMING TO AN **END!**
"ETHAN SOMEHOW ARRANGES TO GET US **GUEST SHOTS** ONSTAGE WITH A NUMBER OF **ROCK GROUPS** TOURING THE COUNTRY.
"THE CROWD DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO **MAKE** OF ME AT FIRST, BUT I MUDDLE THROUGH, GETTING BETTER WITH EVERY **GIG.** MY MESSAGE--THAT **ROCK 'N' ROLL** IS THE SPIRIT OF **FREE AMERICA**--IS ONE THEY HAVE NO TROUBLE UNDERSTANDING.


"I GET TIRED OF WARMING UP CROWDS --I WANT TO TAKE SYMBOLIC ACTION AGAINST SOME OF THE PROBLEMS FACING AMERICA. ETHAN HAS HIS OWN IDEAS...
THEN THE BUCKIES WILL COME ON AND ATTACK YOU--
WAIT A MINUTE! CAPTAIN AMERICA NEVER STAGED A FIGHT!
OF COURSE HE DID!
EVERYTHING'S SHOW BUSINESS, JOHNNY!
"HE TALKS ME INTO IT. LEMAR AND THE BOYS PASS THEMSELVES OFF AS CAP-BOOSTERS AND PRETEND TO WANT TO MUZZLE ME...
"ETHAN'S RIGHT. THE CROWD GOES WILD, EATS IT UP. I SCORE BIG POINTS.
"CAP VISITS ME AT DINNER, TRIES TO WARN ME AGAINST USING THEATRICS TO FURTHER MY CAUSE. I CHALLENGE HIM TO A FIGHT.
"HE REFUSES.
"BUT A FEW WEEKS LATER, AT THE AMERICAID BENEFIT CONCERT, WE MEET AGAIN, AND I GIVE HIM NO CHOICE ABOUT FIGHTING ME OR NOT--
NEWS BULLETIN, GRAMPAW--THE NATIONAL BIRD IS THE EAGLE, NOT THE CHICKEN!


"WE GO AT IT FOR THE BETTER PART OF AN HOUR. DESPITE MY GREATER SIZE AND STRENGTH, HE PUTS UP ONE INCREDIBLE FIGHT.
"TO BEAT HIM WOULD HAVE TAKEN ALL I HAD THAT PARTICULAR DAY. AND TO WHAT POINT? NOBODY WAS WATCHING US GO AT IT THERE IN THE PARKING LOT.
"SO, WHEN I HEAR SPRINGSTEEN COME ON STAGE, I STOP FIGHTING, EXCUSE MYSELF, AND TAKE OFF.
"CAP WISELY DOESN'T TRY TO STOP ME.
"A FEW WEEKS LATER, ETHAN AND I ARE IN A HOTEL ROOM IN ATLANTA WHEN A NEWS BULLETIN COMES ON...
--AN UNIDENTIFIED GUNMAN HAS SOMEHOW PERCHED ATOP THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT AND HAS OPENED FIRE TWICE ON THE CROWD BELOW...
WHAT AN INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITY FOR US!
GET DRESSED. I'LL BOOK US A FLIGHT TO D.C.!
"ETHAN THINKS IF I CAN TAKE OUT THIS WACKED-OUT SNIPER, I'LL MAKE THE NATIONAL NEWS...
"I AGREE TO IT.
"BUT WHEN I GET THERE, THE TASK IS A LOT SCARIER THAN I'D IMAGINED. AS IF SCALING THE MONUMENT WEREN'T TOUGH ENOUGH, THE LOONEYTUNE TAKES POTSHOTS AT ME.
"FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I STARE DEATH IN THE FACE LIKE MY BROTHER MIKE DID IN 'NAM. THE SENSATION INVIGORATES ME LIKE NOTHING I'VE EVER DONE BEFORE...
"I MANAGE TO KNOCK THE CREEP FROM HIS PERCH AND HE BLOWS HIMSELF UP ON THE WAY DOWN.
"I SAVED THE MONUMENT--THE WHOLE CITY! FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I WAS A BONA FIDE HERO.
"MY DEED DIDN'T GO UNNOTICED BY FOLKS IN HIGH PLACES, EITHER. THE NEXT AFTERNOON I GET AN INVITATION TO SEE VALERIE COOPER, THIS SPECIAL ADVISER TO THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF.
THE MAN WHO ORIGINALLY PLAYED CAPTAIN AMERICA WAS RECENTLY ASKED TO SERVE HIS COUNTRY IN AN OFFICIAL CAPACITY AGAIN. HE REFUSED SO WE STRIPPED HIM OF HIS SHIELD AND UNIFORM.
IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE FIND SOMEONE NEW TO BE CAPTAIN AMERICA. WE'RE CONSIDERING YOU.
WHAT? ME--CAP?!?
CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE!

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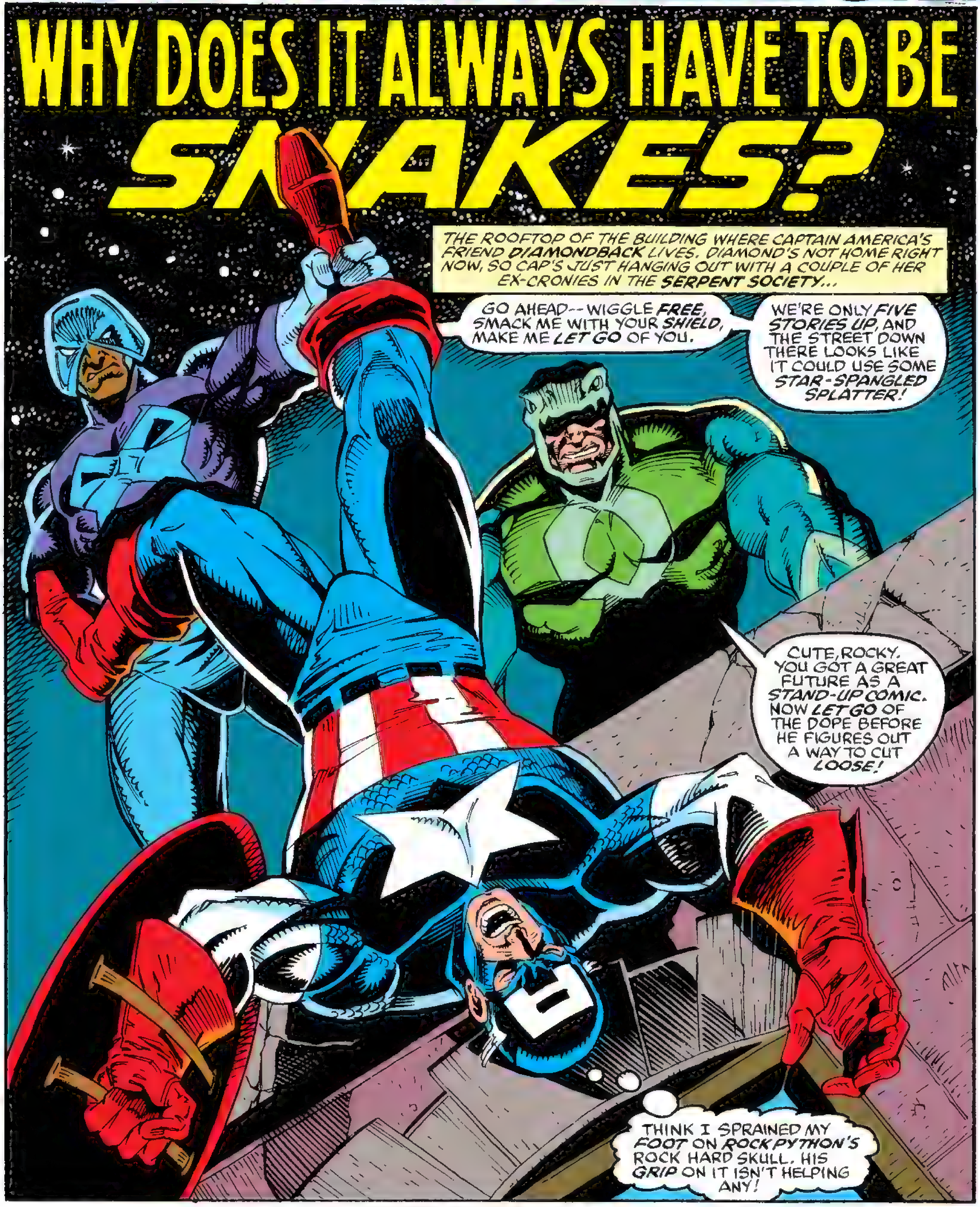
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE A AUTHORITY
SNAKE HUNT!
RON LIM 90 + DAN BULANADI

STEVE ROGERS . . . BORN IN THE U.S.A., RAISED TO CHERISH THE IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY, ENDOWED WITH A SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE, AND DRIVEN TO BE THE MOST CAPABLE COMBATANT IN THE WORLD. NOW AS BOTH LONE CRUSADER AND LEADER OF THE RENOWNED AVENGERS, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM!

Stan Lee PRESENTS:

CAPTAIN AMERICA!

WHY DOES IT ALWAYS HAVE TO BE SNAKES?


THE ROOFTOP OF THE BUILDING WHERE CAPTAIN AMERICA'S FRIEND DIAMONDBACK LIVES. DIAMOND'S NOT HOME RIGHT NOW, SO CAP'S JUST HANGING OUT WITH A COUPLE OF HER EX-CRONIES IN THE SERPENT SOCIETY...
GO AHEAD--WIGGLE FREE, SMACK ME WITH YOUR SHIELD, MAKE ME LET GO OF YOU.
WE'RE ONLY FIVE STORIES UP, AND THE STREET DOWN THERE LOOKS LIKE IT COULD USE SOME STAR-SPANGLED SPLATTER!
CUTE, ROCKY. YOU GOT A GREAT FUTURE AS A STAND-UP COMIC. NOW LET GO OF THE DOPE BEFORE HE FIGURES OUT A WAY TO CUT LOOSE!
THINK I SPRAINED MY FOOT ON ROCK PYTHON'S ROCK HARD SKULL. HIS GRIP ON IT ISN'T HELPING ANY!

MARK GRUENWALD writer · RON LIM penciler · DANNY BULANADI inker · JOE ROSEN letterer · STEVE BUCCELLATO colorist · RALPH MACCHIO editor · TOM DEFALCO ed in chief

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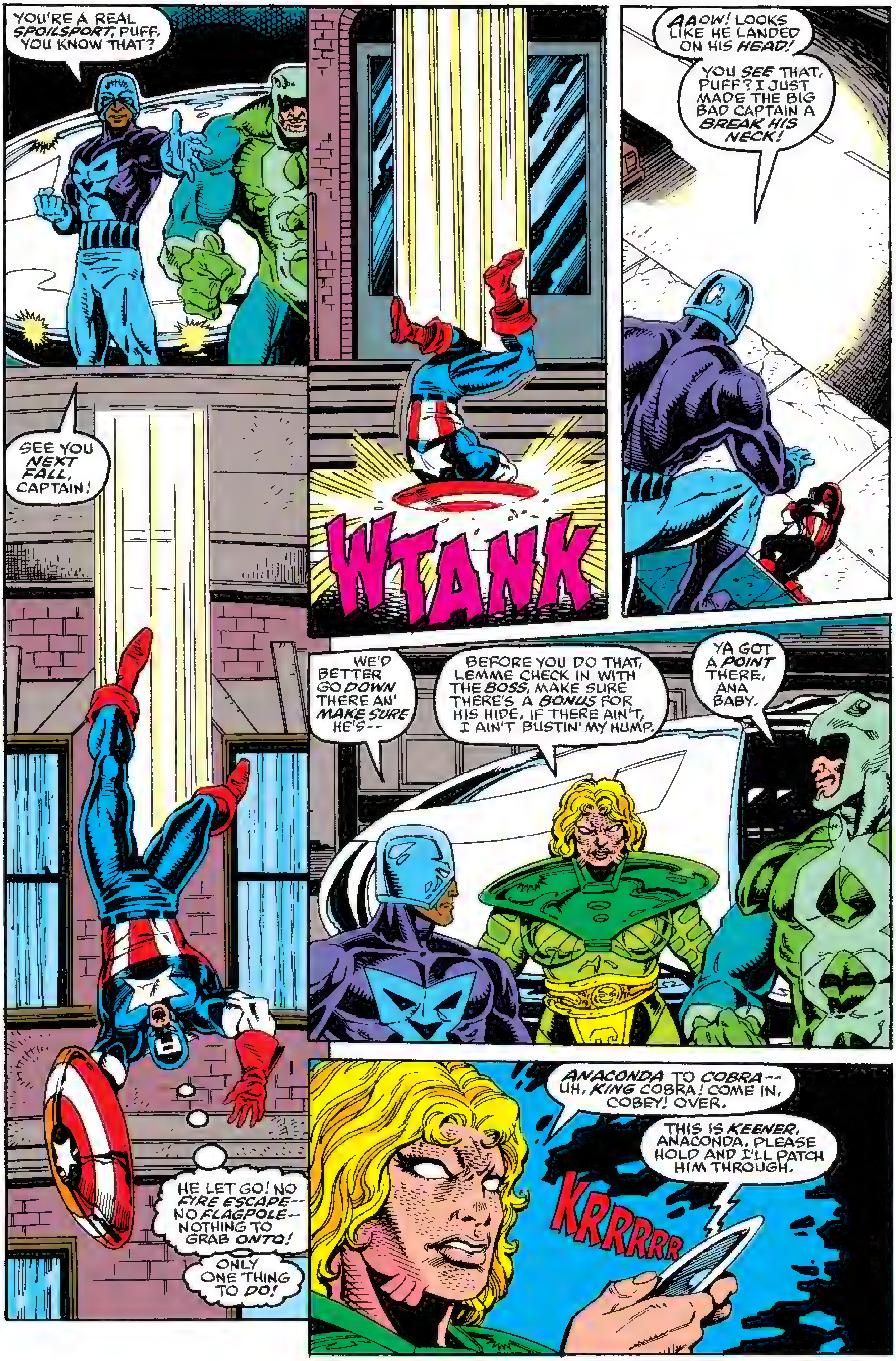
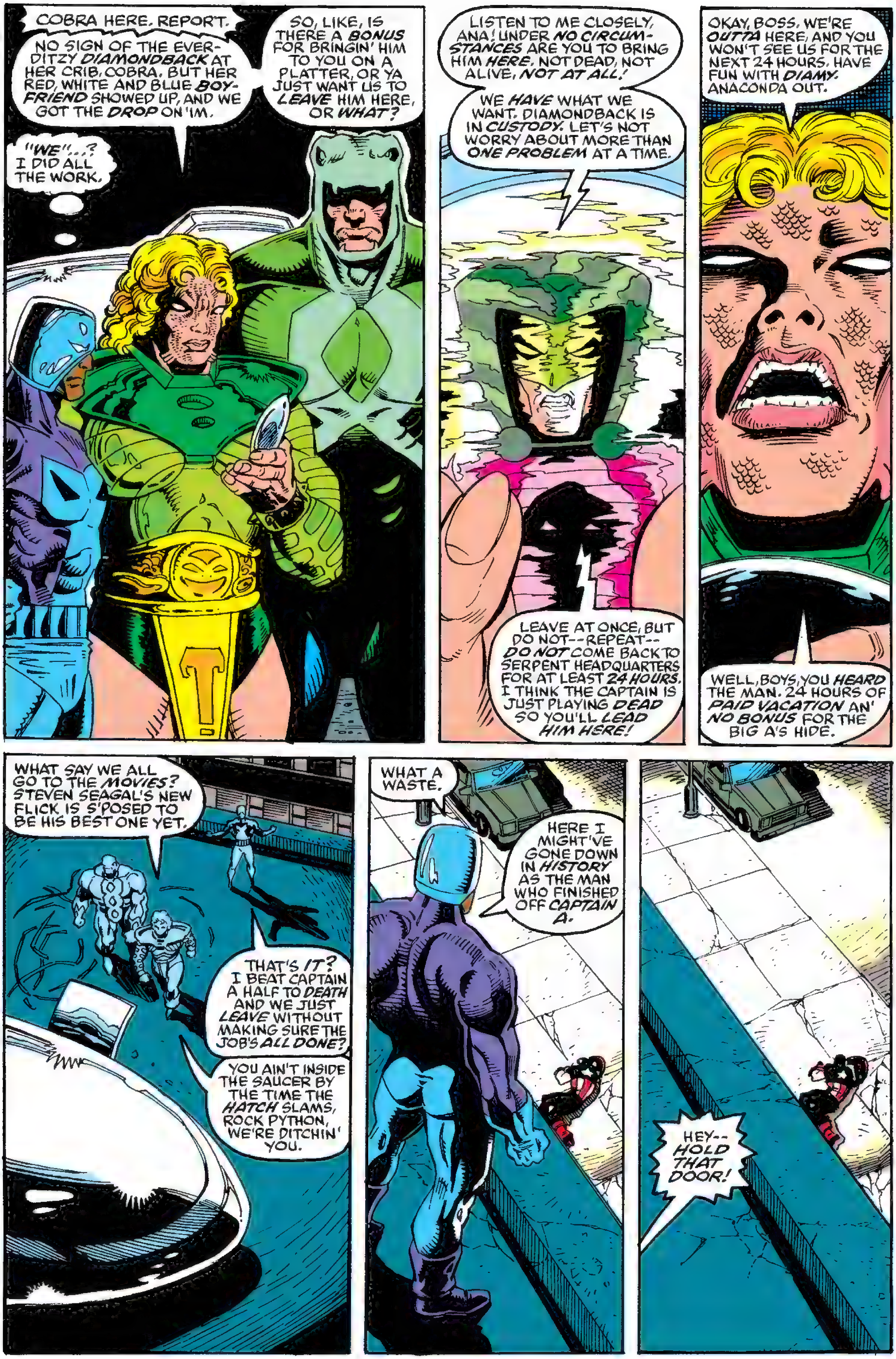
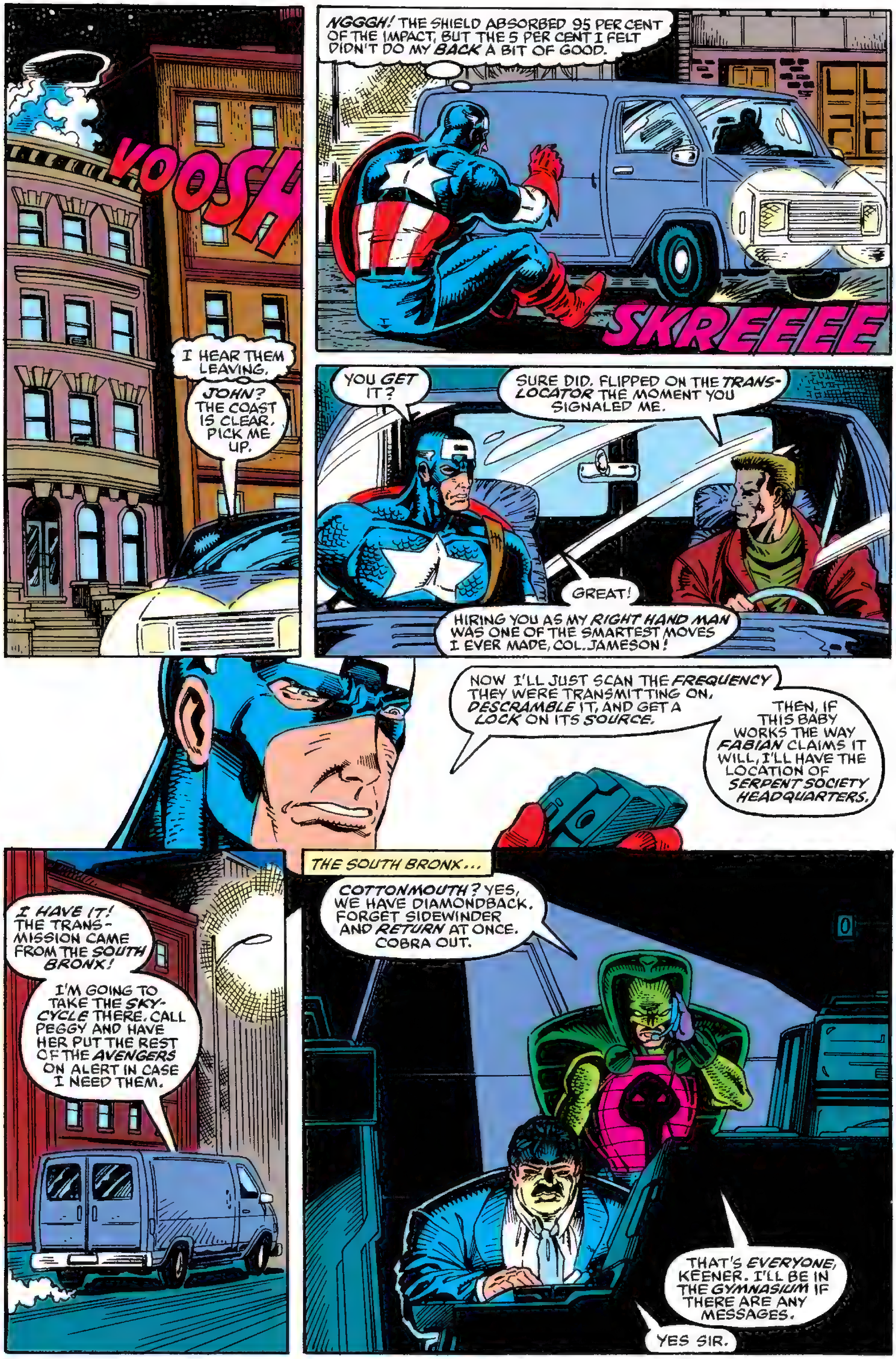
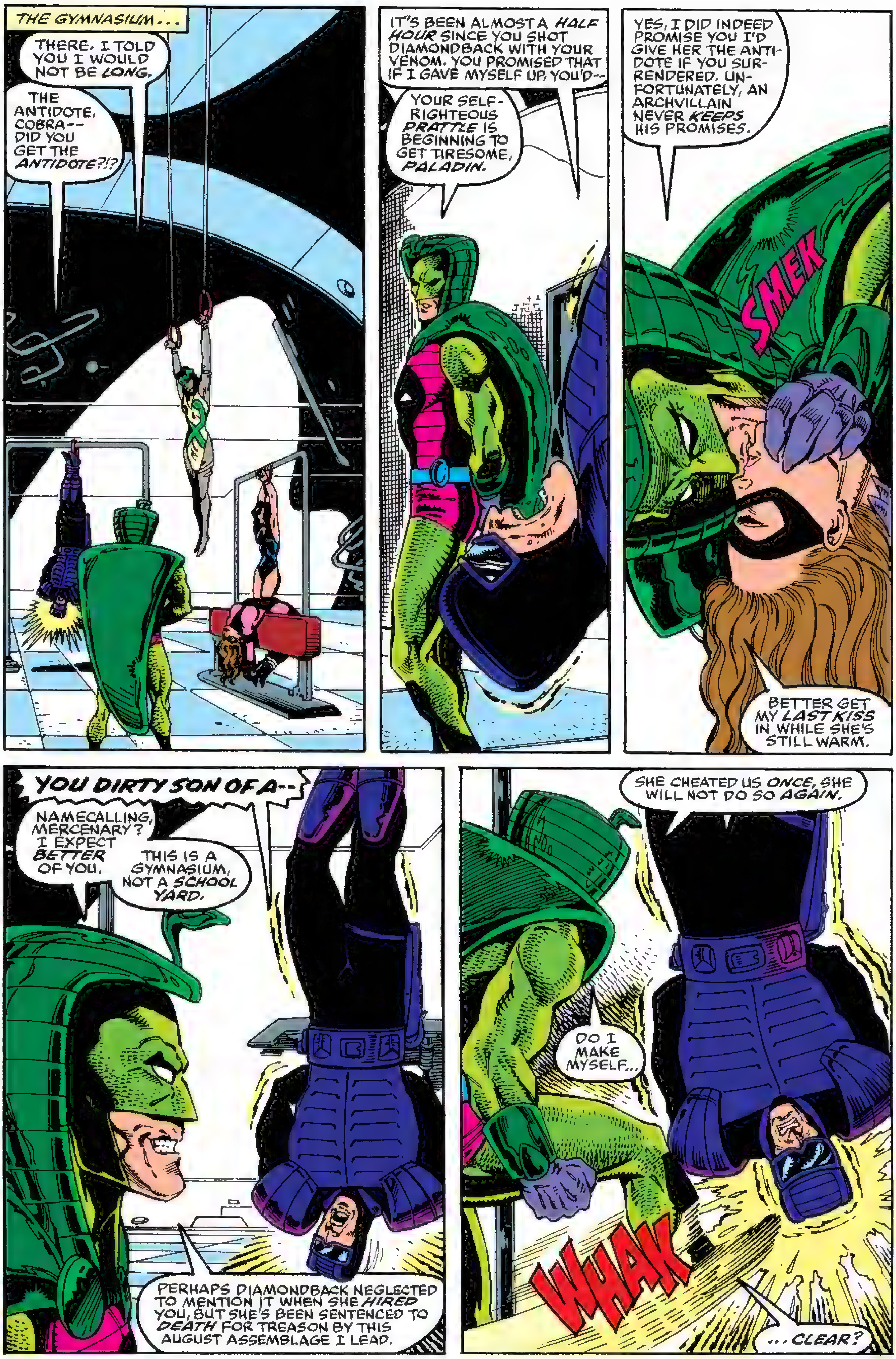
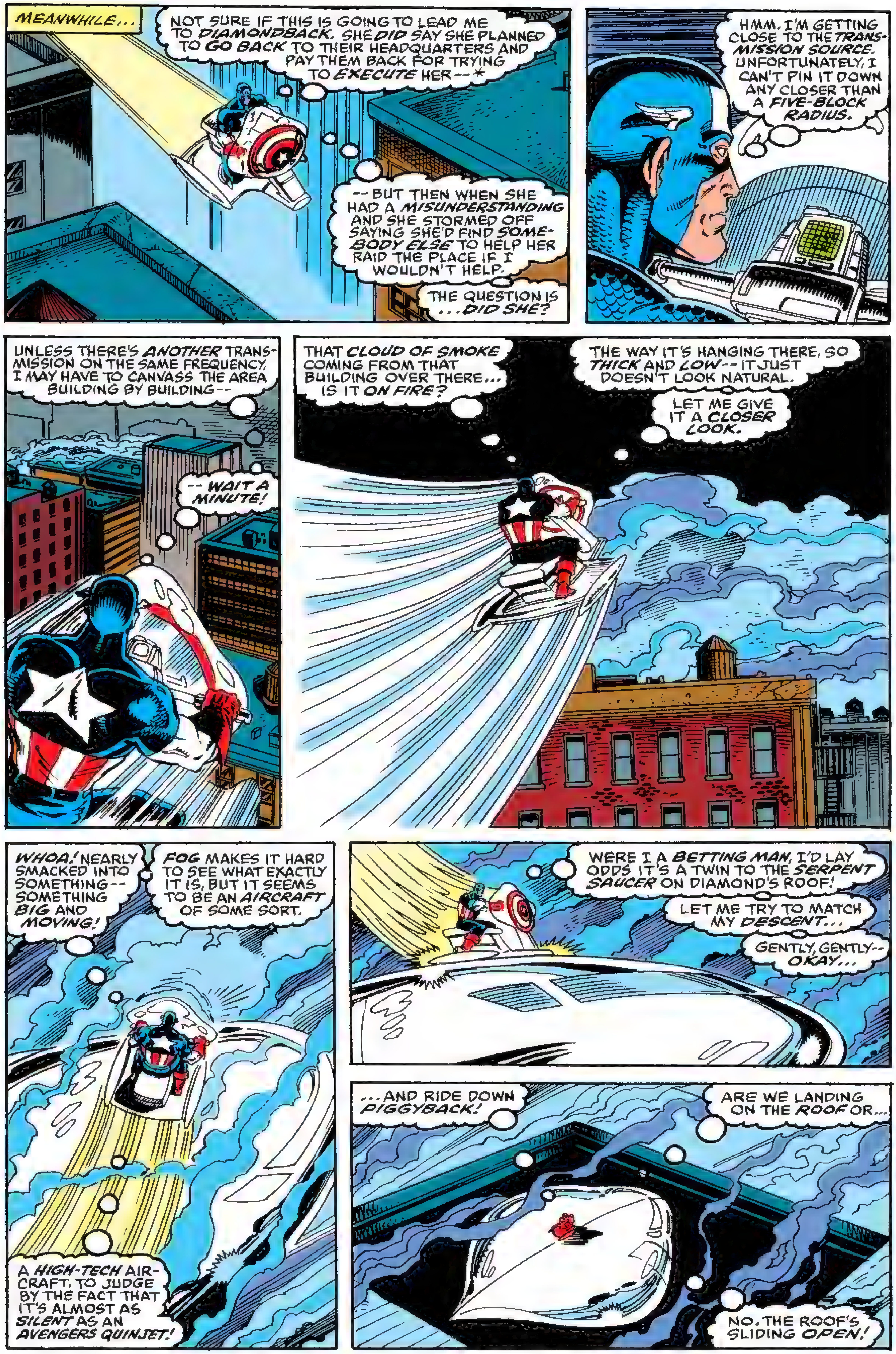
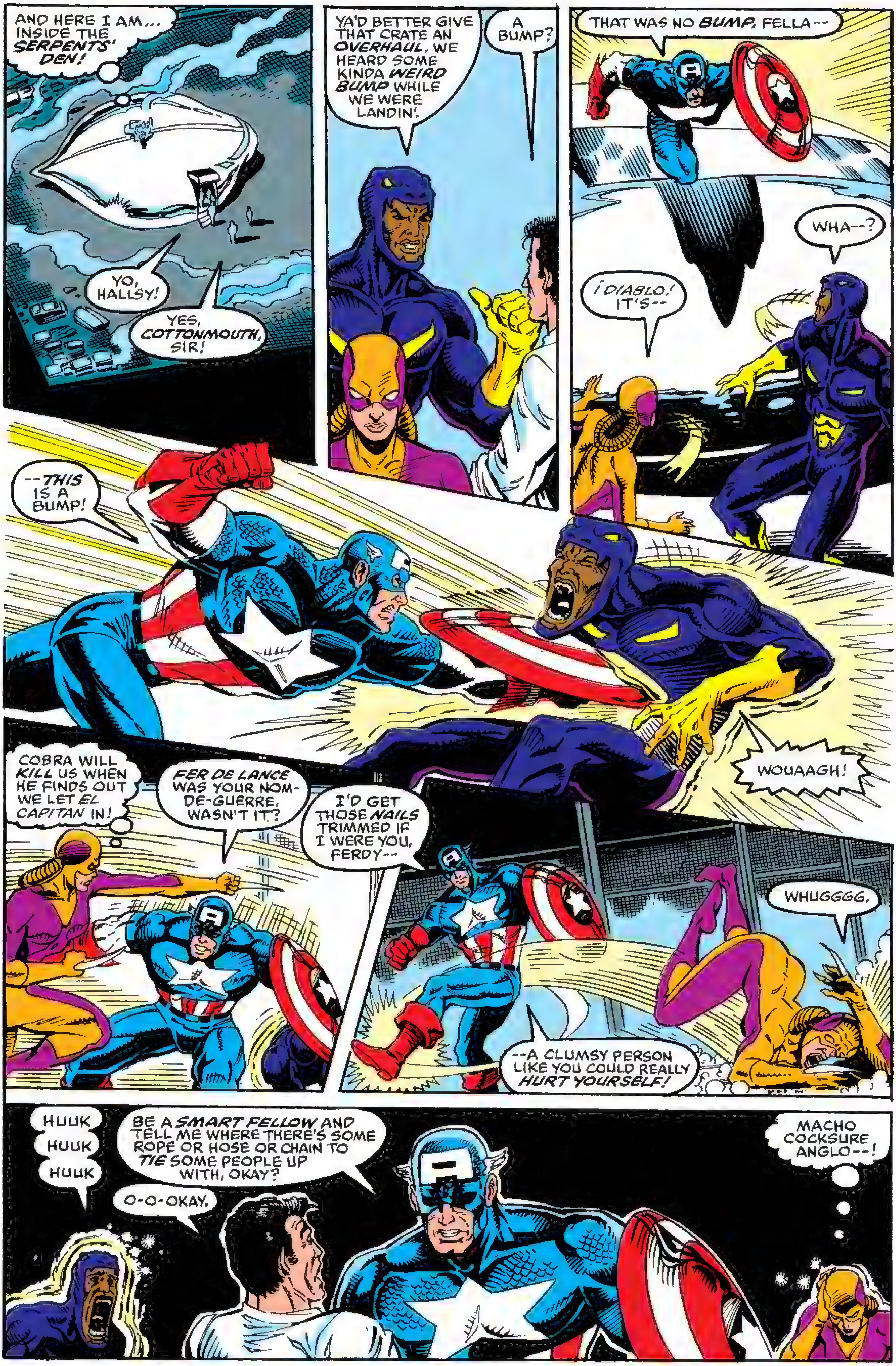

YOU'RE A REAL *SPOILSPORT*, PUFF. YOU KNOW THAT?
SEE YOU *NEXT FALL*, CAPTAIN!
HE LET GO! NO *FIRE ESCAPE*-- NO *FLAGPOLE*-- NOTHING TO GRAB *ONTO!*
ONLY ONE THING TO *DO!*
WTANK
*AA*OW! LOOKS LIKE HE LANDED ON HIS *HEAD!*
YOU *SEE* THAT, PUFF? I JUST MADE THE BIG BAD CAPTAIN A *BREAK HIS NECK!*
WE'D BETTER GO *DOWN* THERE AN' *MAKE SURE* HE'S--
BEFORE YOU DO THAT, LEMME CHECK IN WITH THE *BOSS*, MAKE SURE THERE'S A *BONUS* FOR HIS HIDE. IF THERE AIN'T, I AIN'T BUSTIN' MY HUMP.
YA GOT A *POINT* THERE, ANA BABY.
ANACONDA TO *COBRA*-- UH, *KING* COBRA! COME IN, COBEY! OVER.
THIS IS *KEENER*, ANACONDA. PLEASE HOLD AND I'LL PATCH HIM THROUGH.
KRRRRRR

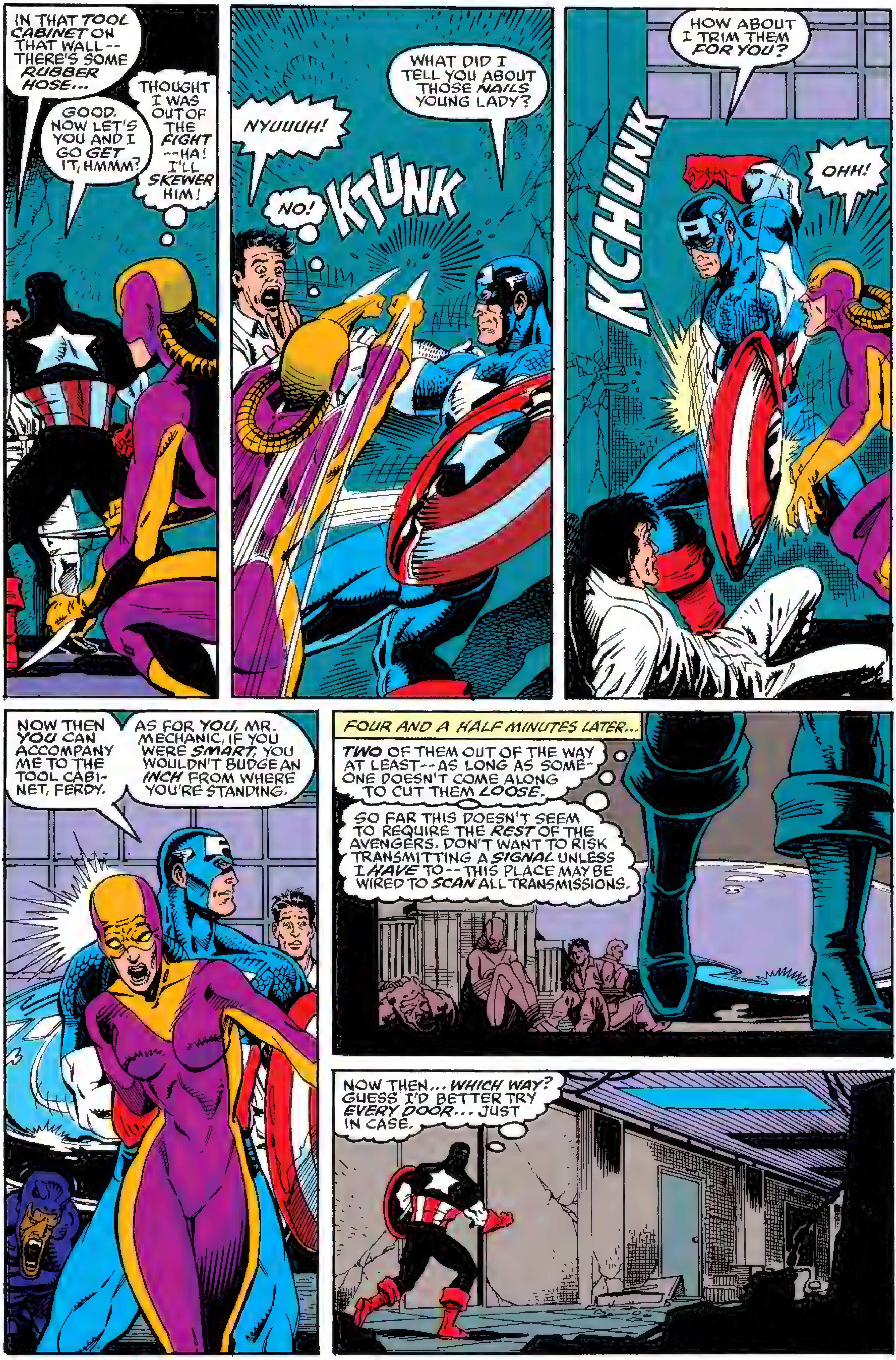

COBRA HERE. REPORT.
NO SIGN OF THE EVER-DITZY *DIAMONDBACK* AT HER CRIB, COBRA, BUT HER RED, WHITE AND BLUE *BOYFRIEND* SHOWED UP, AND WE GOT THE *DROP* ON 'IM.
"*WE*"...? I DID ALL THE WORK.
SO, LIKE, IS THERE A *BONUS* FOR BRINGIN' HIM TO YOU ON A PLATTER, OR YA JUST WANT US TO *LEAVE* HIM HERE, OR *WHAT?*
LISTEN TO ME CLOSELY, ANA! UNDER *NO CIRCUMSTANCES* ARE YOU TO BRING HIM *HERE*. NOT DEAD, NOT ALIVE, *NOT AT ALL!*
WE *HAVE* WHAT WE WANT. DIAMONDBACK IS IN *CUSTODY*. LET'S NOT WORRY ABOUT MORE THAN *ONE PROBLEM* AT A TIME.
LEAVE AT ONCE, BUT DO NOT--REPEAT--*DO NOT* COME BACK TO SERPENT HEADQUARTERS FOR AT LEAST *24 HOURS*. I THINK THE CAPTAIN IS JUST PLAYING *DEAD* SO YOU'LL *LEAD HIM HERE!*
OKAY, BOSS, WE'RE *OUTTA* HERE, AND YOU WON'T SEE US FOR THE NEXT 24 HOURS. HAVE FUN WITH *DIAMY*. ANACONDA OUT.
WELL, BOYS, YOU *HEARD* THE MAN. 24 HOURS OF *PAID VACATION* AN' *NO BONUS* FOR THE BIG A'S HIDE.
WHAT SAY WE ALL GO TO THE *MOVIES?* STEVEN SEAGAL'S NEW FLICK IS S'POSED TO BE HIS BEST ONE YET.
THAT'S *IT?* I BEAT CAPTAIN A HALF TO *DEATH* AND WE JUST *LEAVE* WITHOUT MAKING SURE THE JOB'S *ALL DONE?*
YOU AIN'T INSIDE THE SAUCER BY THE TIME THE *HATCH* SLAMS, ROCK PYTHON, WE'RE DITCHIN' YOU.
WHAT A WASTE.
HERE I MIGHT'VE GONE DOWN IN *HISTORY* AS THE MAN WHO FINISHED OFF *CAPTAIN A.*
HEY-- *HOLD THAT DOOR!*

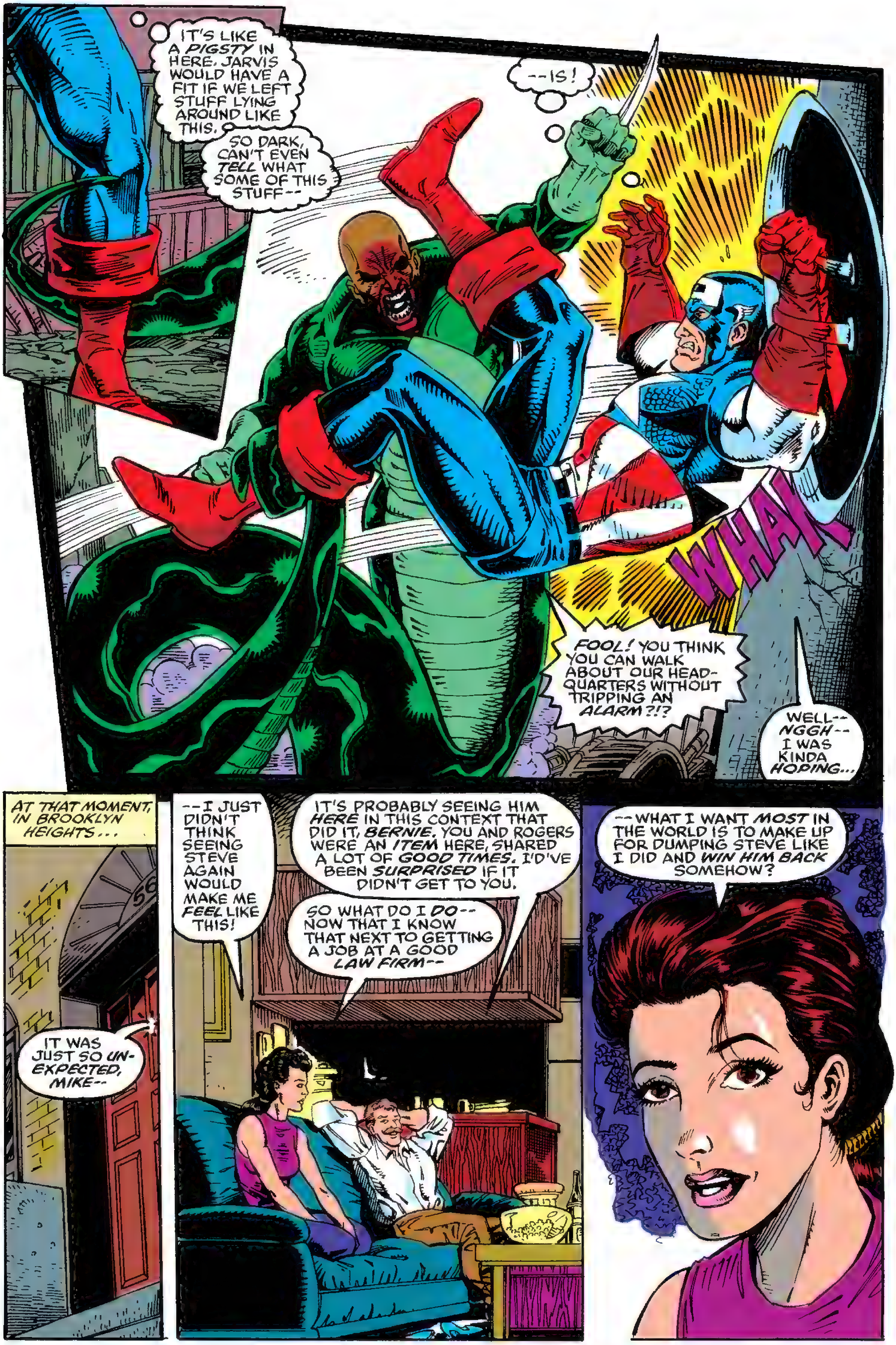

VOOSH
NGGGH! THE SHIELD ABSORBED 95 PER CENT OF THE IMPACT, BUT THE 5 PER CENT I FELT DIDN'T DO MY BACK A BIT OF GOOD.
SKREEEEE
I HEAR THEM LEAVING.
JOHN? THE COAST IS CLEAR. PICK ME UP.
YOU GET IT?
SURE DID. FLIPPED ON THE TRANS-LOCATOR THE MOMENT YOU SIGNALED ME.
GREAT!
HIRING YOU AS MY RIGHT HAND MAN WAS ONE OF THE SMARTEST MOVES I EVER MADE, COL. JAMESON!
NOW I'LL JUST SCAN THE FREQUENCY THEY WERE TRANSMITTING ON, DESCRAMBLE IT, AND GET A LOCK ON ITS SOURCE.
THEN, IF THIS BABY WORKS THE WAY FABIAN CLAIMS IT WILL, I'LL HAVE THE LOCATION OF SERPENT SOCIETY HEADQUARTERS.
I HAVE IT! THE TRANSMISSION CAME FROM THE SOUTH BRONX!
I'M GOING TO TAKE THE SKY-CYCLE THERE. CALL PEGGY AND HAVE HER PUT THE REST OF THE AVENGERS ON ALERT IN CASE I NEED THEM.
THE SOUTH BRONX...
COTTONMOUTH? YES, WE HAVE DIAMONDBACK. FORGET SIDEWINDER AND RETURN AT ONCE. COBRA OUT.
THAT'S EVERYONE, KEENER. I'LL BE IN THE GYMNASIUM IF THERE ARE ANY MESSAGES.
YES SIR.

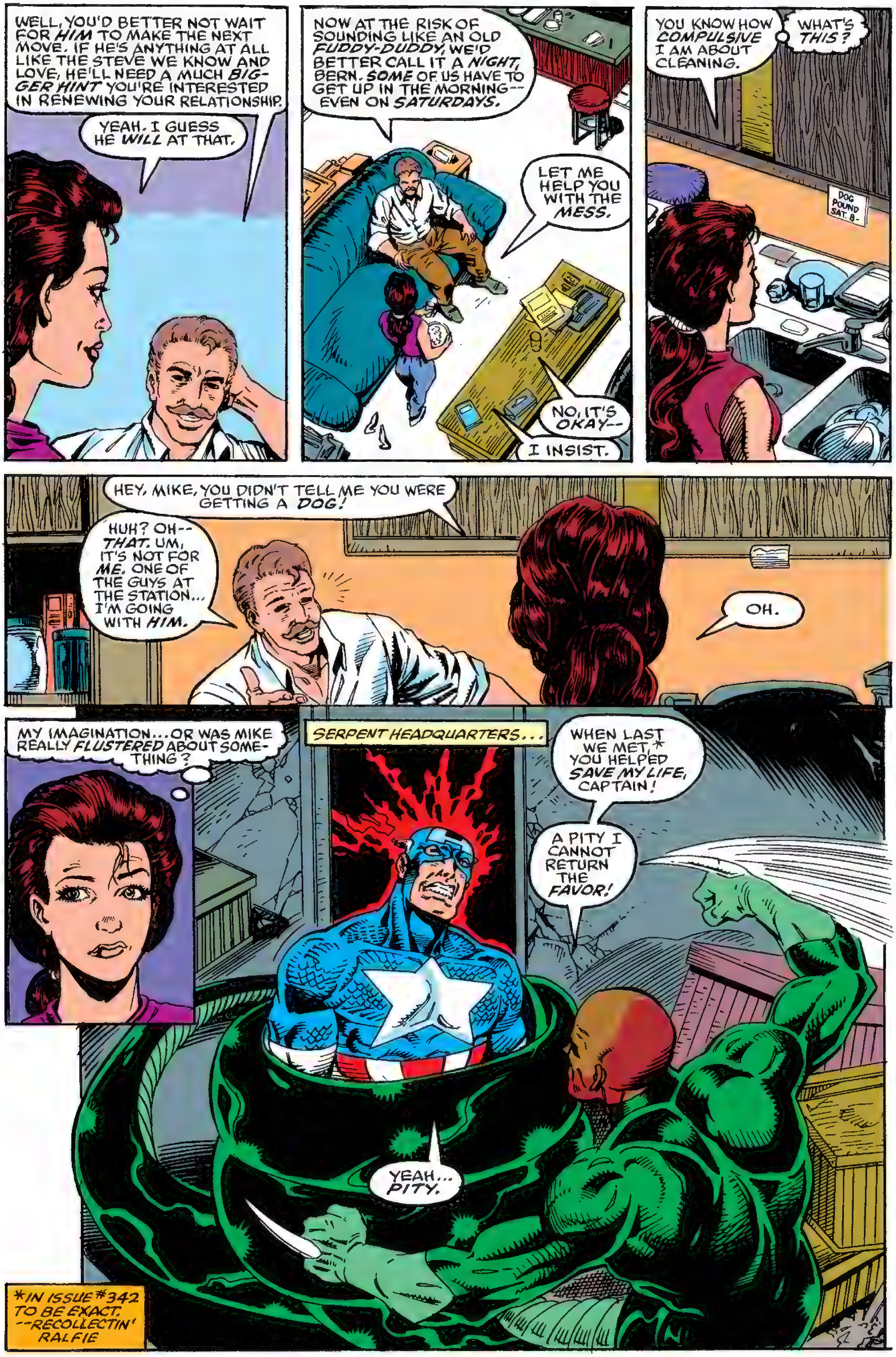

THE GYMNASIUM...
THERE. I TOLD YOU I WOULD NOT BE *LONG.*
THE ANTIDOTE, COBRA-- DID YOU GET THE *ANTIDOTE?!?*
IT'S BEEN ALMOST A *HALF HOUR* SINCE YOU SHOT DIAMONDBACK WITH YOUR VENOM. YOU PROMISED THAT IF I GAVE MYSELF UP, YOU'D--
YOUR SELF-RIGHTEOUS *PRATTLE* IS BEGINNING TO GET TIRESOME, *PALADIN.*
YES, I DID INDEED PROMISE YOU I'D GIVE HER THE ANTIDOTE IF YOU SURRENDERED. UNFORTUNATELY, AN ARCHVILLAIN NEVER *KEEPS* HIS PROMISES.
SMEK
BETTER GET MY *LAST KISS* IN WHILE SHE'S STILL WARM.
YOU DIRTY SON OF A--
NAMECALLING, MERCENARY? I EXPECT *BETTER* OF YOU.
THIS IS A GYMNASIUM, NOT A *SCHOOL YARD.*
PERHAPS DIAMONDBACK NEGLECTED TO MENTION IT WHEN SHE *HIRED* YOU, BUT SHE'S BEEN SENTENCED TO *DEATH* FOR TREASON BY THIS AUGUST ASSEMBLAGE I LEAD.
SHE CHEATED US *ONCE,* SHE WILL NOT DO SO *AGAIN.*
DO I MAKE MYSELF...
WHAK
...CLEAR?

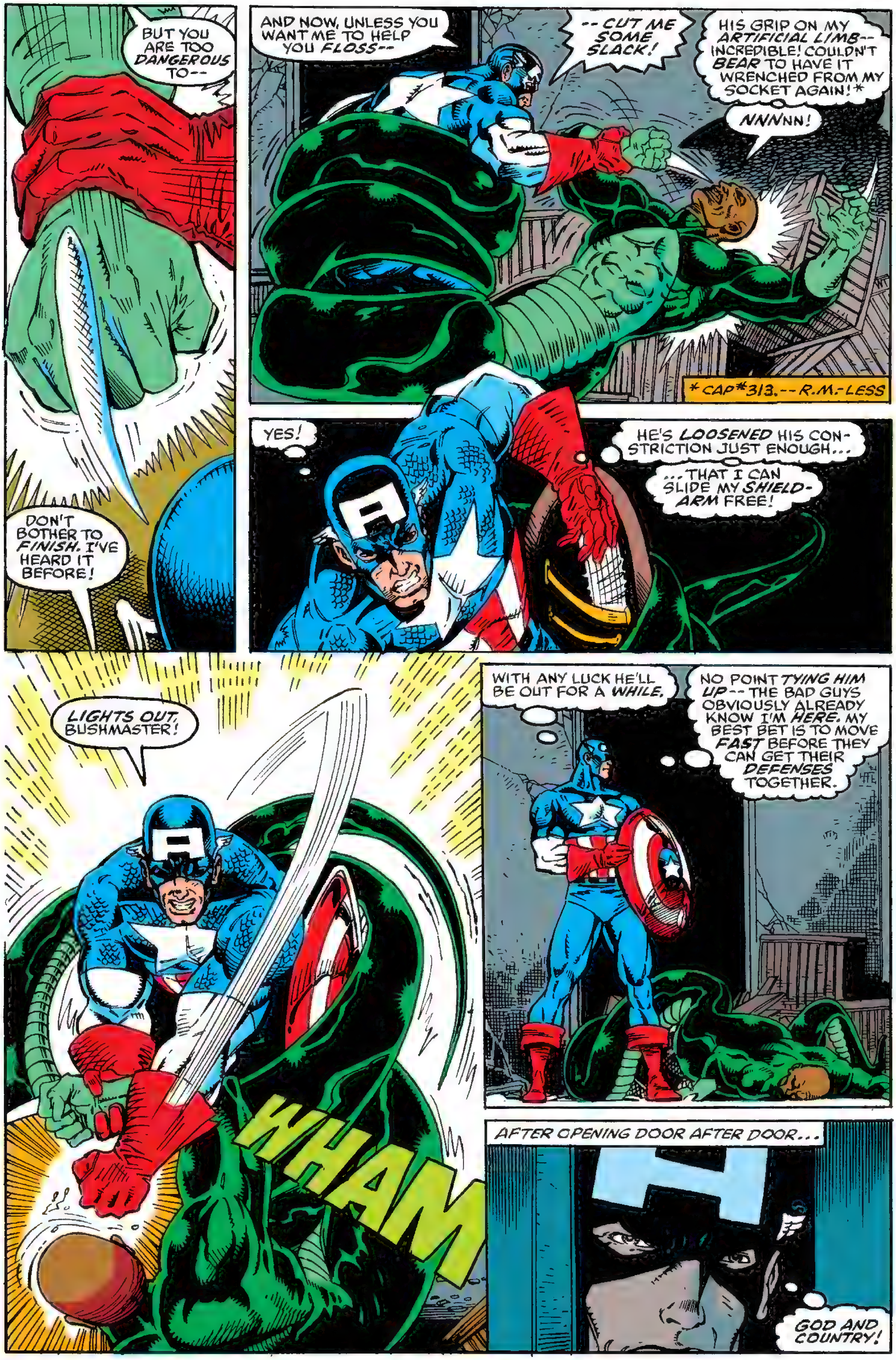

MEANWHILE...
NOT SURE IF THIS IS GOING TO LEAD ME TO DIAMONDBACK. SHE DID SAY SHE PLANNED TO GO BACK TO THEIR HEADQUARTERS AND PAY THEM BACK FOR TRYING TO EXECUTE HER--*
--BUT THEN WHEN SHE HAD A MISUNDERSTANDING AND SHE STORMED OFF SAYING SHE'D FIND SOMEBODY ELSE TO HELP HER RAID THE PLACE IF I WOULDN'T HELP.
THE QUESTION IS ...DID SHE?
HMM. I'M GETTING CLOSE TO THE TRANSMISSION SOURCE. UNFORTUNATELY, I CAN'T PIN IT DOWN ANY CLOSER THAN A FIVE-BLOCK RADIUS.
UNLESS THERE'S ANOTHER TRANSMISSION ON THE SAME FREQUENCY, I MAY HAVE TO CANVASS THE AREA BUILDING BY BUILDING--
--WAIT A MINUTE!
THAT CLOUD OF SMOKE COMING FROM THAT BUILDING OVER THERE... IS IT ON FIRE?
THE WAY IT'S HANGING THERE, SO THICK AND LOW--IT JUST DOESN'T LOOK NATURAL.
LET ME GIVE IT A CLOSER LOOK.
WHOA! NEARLY SMACKED INTO SOMETHING--SOMETHING BIG AND MOVING!
FOG MAKES IT HARD TO SEE WHAT EXACTLY IT IS, BUT IT SEEMS TO BE AN AIRCRAFT OF SOME SORT.
A HIGH-TECH AIRCRAFT, TO JUDGE BY THE FACT THAT IT'S ALMOST AS SILENT AS AN AVENGERS QUINJET!
WERE I A BETTING MAN, I'D LAY ODDS IT'S A TWIN TO THE SERPENT SAUCER ON DIAMOND'S ROOF!
LET ME TRY TO MATCH MY DESCENT...
GENTLY, GENTLY--OKAY...
...AND RIDE DOWN PIGGYBACK!
ARE WE LANDING ON THE ROOF OR...
NO. THE ROOF'S SLIDING OPEN!

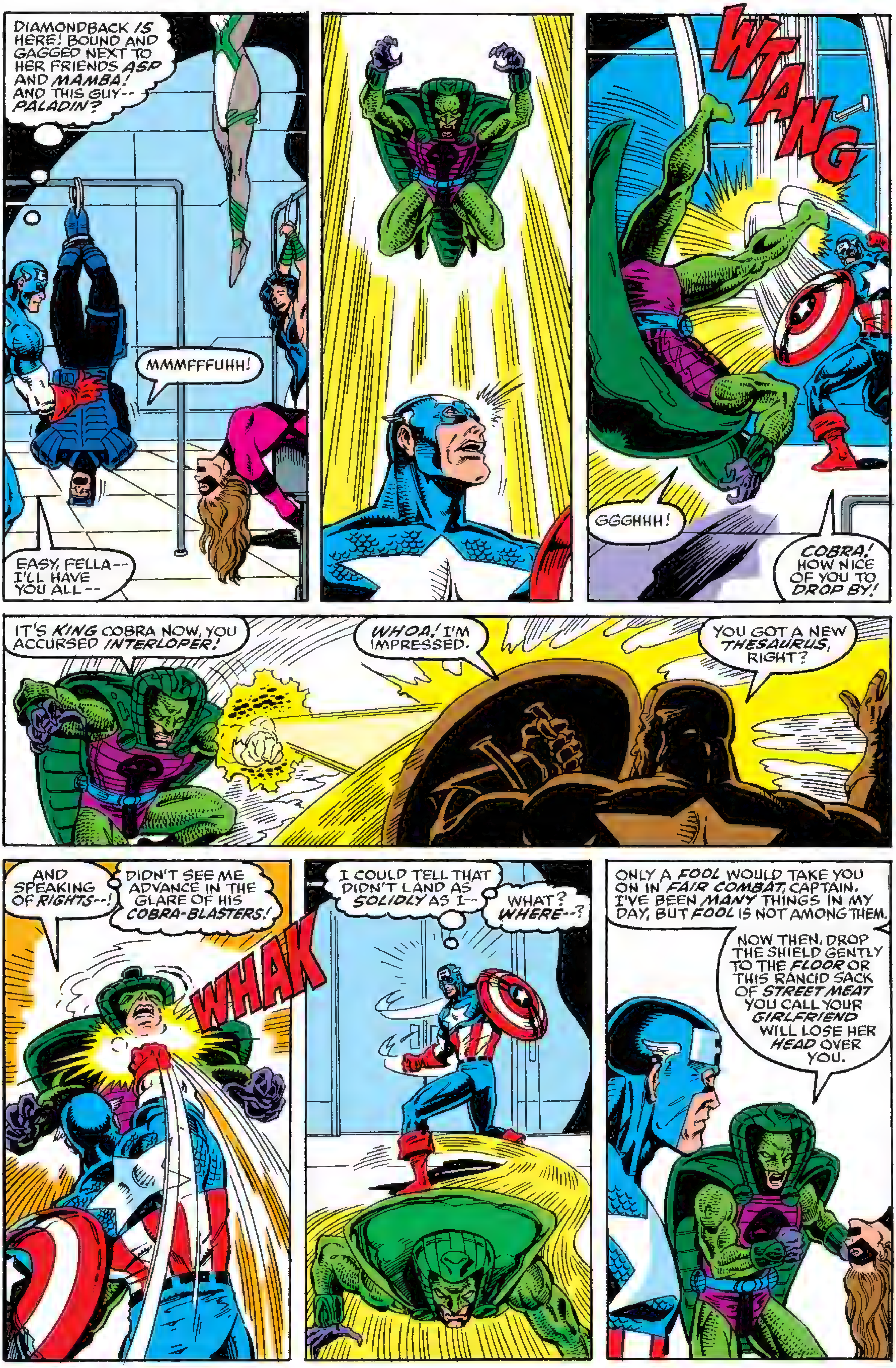

AND HERE I AM... INSIDE THE *SERPENTS' DEN!*
YO, HALLSY!
YES, *COTTONMOUTH,* SIR!
YA'D BETTER GIVE THAT CRATE AN *OVERHAUL.* WE HEARD SOME KINDA *WEIRD BUMP* WHILE WE WERE LANDIN'.
A BUMP?
THAT WAS NO *BUMP,* FELLA--
WHA--?
¡*DIABLO!* IT'S--
--*THIS* IS A BUMP!
WOUAAGH!
COBRA WILL *KILL* US WHEN HE FINDS OUT WE LET *EL CAPITAN* IN!
FER DE LANCE WAS YOUR NOM-DE-GUERRE, WASN'T IT?
I'D GET THOSE *NAILS* TRIMMED IF I WERE YOU, FERDY--
WHUGGGG.
--A CLUMSY PERSON LIKE YOU COULD REALLY *HURT YOURSELF!*
HUUK HUUK HUUK
BE A *SMART FELLOW* AND TELL ME WHERE THERE'S SOME ROPE OR HOSE OR CHAIN TO *TIE* SOME PEOPLE UP WITH, OKAY?
O-O-OKAY.
MACHO COCKSURE ANGLO--!

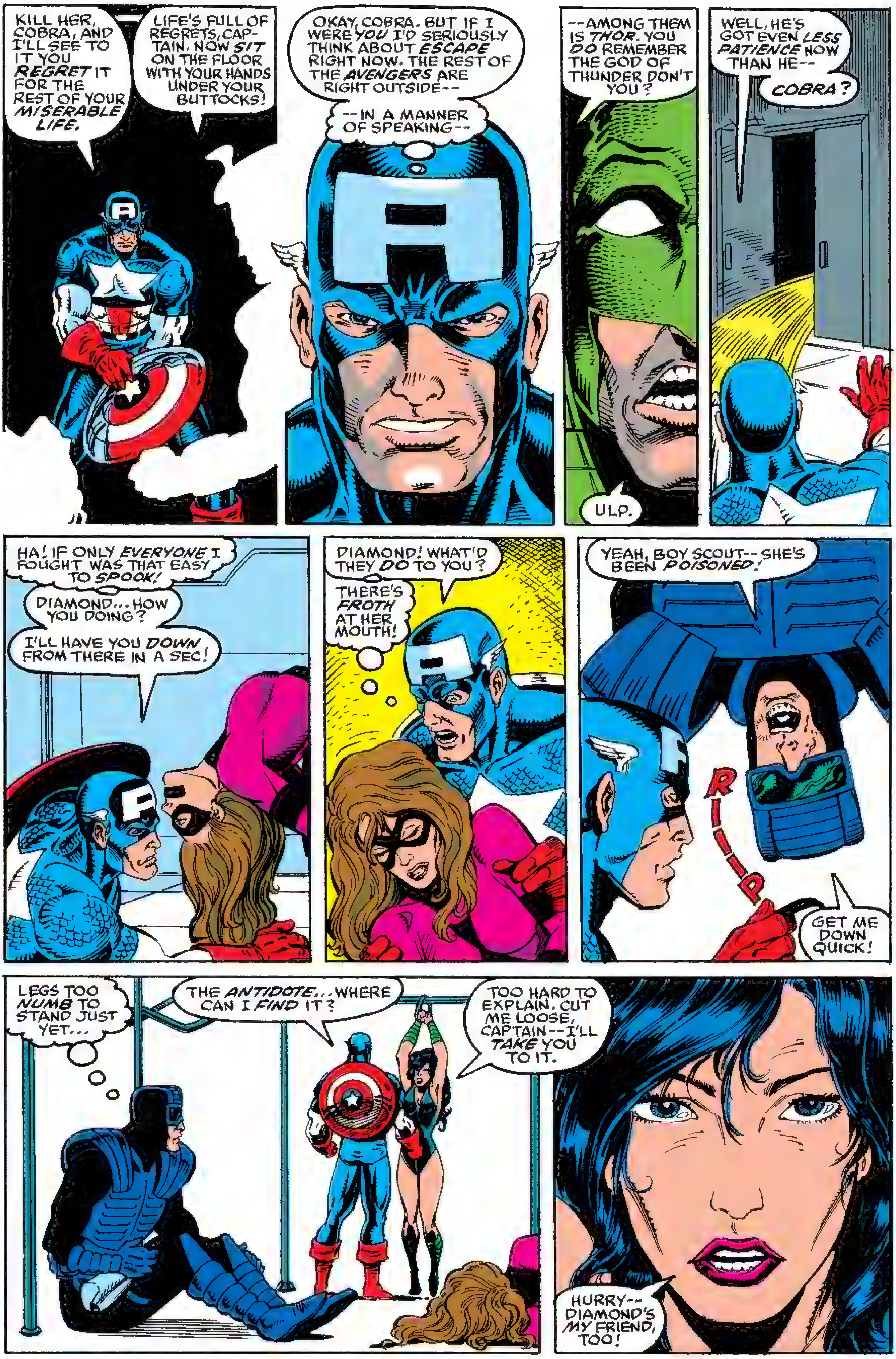

IN THAT *TOOL CABINET* ON THAT WALL-- THERE'S SOME *RUBBER HOSE*...
GOOD. NOW LET'S YOU AND I GO *GET* IT, HMMM?
THOUGHT I WAS OUT OF THE *FIGHT* --HA! I'LL *SKEWER* HIM!
NYUUUH!
WHAT DID I TELL YOU ABOUT THOSE *NAILS* YOUNG LADY?
NO!
KTUNK
HOW ABOUT I TRIM THEM *FOR YOU?*
KCHUNK
OHH!
NOW THEN *YOU* CAN ACCOMPANY ME TO THE TOOL CABINET, FERDY.
AS FOR *YOU*, MR. MECHANIC, IF YOU WERE *SMART*, YOU WOULDN'T BUDGE AN *INCH* FROM WHERE YOU'RE STANDING.
FOUR AND A HALF MINUTES LATER...
TWO OF THEM OUT OF THE WAY AT LEAST--AS LONG AS SOMEONE DOESN'T COME ALONG TO CUT THEM *LOOSE*.
SO FAR THIS DOESN'T SEEM TO REQUIRE THE *REST* OF THE AVENGERS. DON'T WANT TO RISK TRANSMITTING A *SIGNAL* UNLESS I *HAVE* TO--THIS PLACE MAY BE WIRED TO *SCAN* ALL TRANSMISSIONS.
NOW THEN... *WHICH WAY?* GUESS I'D BETTER TRY *EVERY DOOR*... JUST IN CASE.

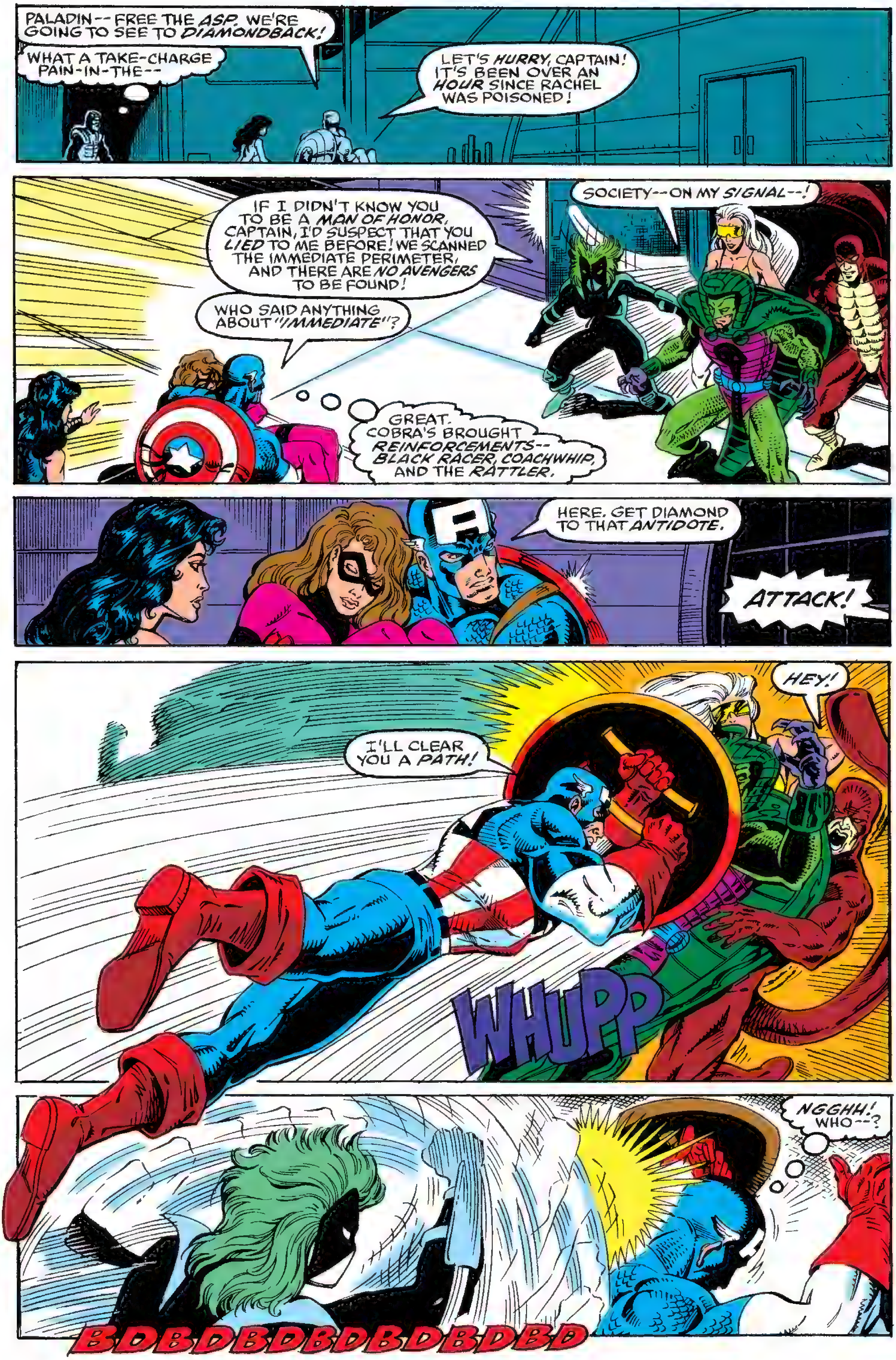

IT'S LIKE A *PIGSTY* IN HERE. JARVIS WOULD HAVE A FIT IF WE LEFT STUFF LYING AROUND LIKE THIS.
SO DARK, CAN'T EVEN *TELL* WHAT SOME OF THIS STUFF--
--IS!
WHAK
FOOL! YOU THINK YOU CAN WALK ABOUT OUR HEADQUARTERS WITHOUT TRIPPING AN *ALARM?!?*
WELL-- *NGGH*-- I WAS KINDA *HOPING...*
AT THAT MOMENT, IN BROOKLYN HEIGHTS...
IT WAS JUST SO *UN-EXPECTED, MIKE*--
--I JUST DIDN'T THINK SEEING STEVE AGAIN WOULD MAKE ME *FEEL* LIKE THIS!
IT'S PROBABLY SEEING HIM *HERE* IN THIS CONTEXT THAT DID IT, *BERNIE*. YOU AND ROGERS WERE AN *ITEM* HERE, SHARED A LOT OF *GOOD TIMES*. I'D'VE BEEN *SURPRISED* IF IT DIDN'T GET TO YOU.
SO WHAT DO I *DO*-- NOW THAT I KNOW THAT NEXT TO GETTING A JOB AT A GOOD *LAW FIRM*--
--WHAT I WANT *MOST* IN THE WORLD IS TO MAKE UP FOR DUMPING STEVE LIKE I DID AND *WIN HIM BACK* SOMEHOW?

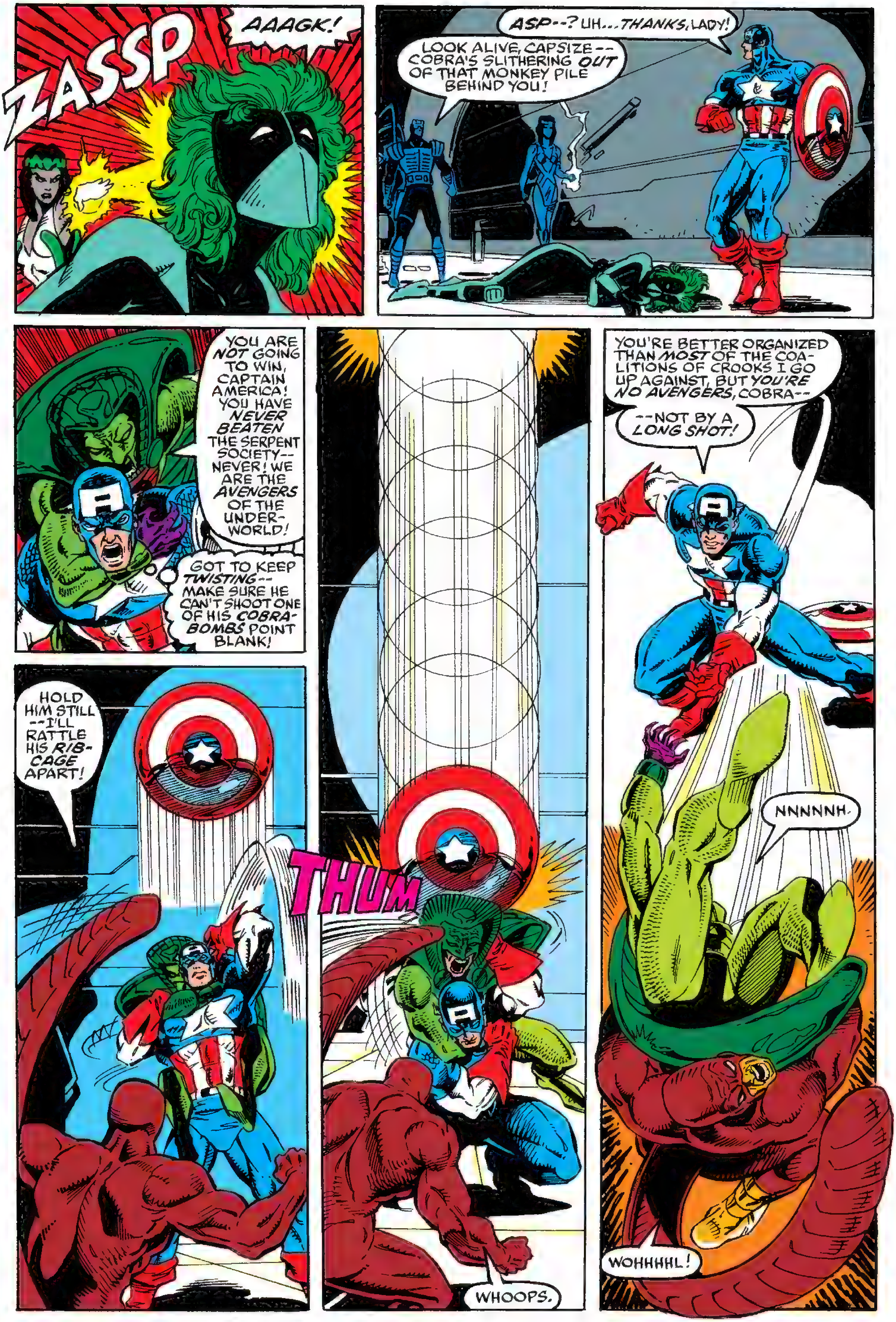

WELL, YOU'D BETTER NOT WAIT FOR *HIM* TO MAKE THE NEXT MOVE. IF HE'S ANYTHING AT ALL LIKE THE STEVE WE KNOW AND LOVE, HE'LL NEED A MUCH *BIGGER HINT* YOU'RE INTERESTED IN RENEWING YOUR RELATIONSHIP.
YEAH. I GUESS HE *WILL* AT THAT.
NOW AT THE RISK OF SOUNDING LIKE AN OLD *FUDDY-DUDDY*, WE'D BETTER CALL IT A *NIGHT*, BERN. *SOME* OF US HAVE TO GET UP IN THE MORNING-- EVEN ON *SATURDAYS.*
LET ME HELP YOU WITH THE *MESS.*
NO, IT'S *OKAY*--
I INSIST.
YOU KNOW HOW *COMPULSIVE* I AM ABOUT CLEANING.
WHAT'S *THIS?*
DOG POUND SAT. 8-
HEY, MIKE, YOU DIDN'T TELL ME YOU WERE GETTING A *DOG!*
HUH? OH-- *THAT.* UM, IT'S NOT FOR *ME.* ONE OF THE GUYS AT THE STATION... I'M GOING WITH *HIM.*
OH.
MY IMAGINATION... OR WAS MIKE REALLY *FLUSTERED* ABOUT SOMETHING?
SERPENT HEADQUARTERS...
WHEN LAST WE MET,* YOU HELPED *SAVE MY LIFE*, CAPTAIN!
A PITY I CANNOT RETURN THE *FAVOR!*
YEAH... *PITY.*
*IN ISSUE #342 TO BE EXACT. --RECOLLECTIN' RALFIE

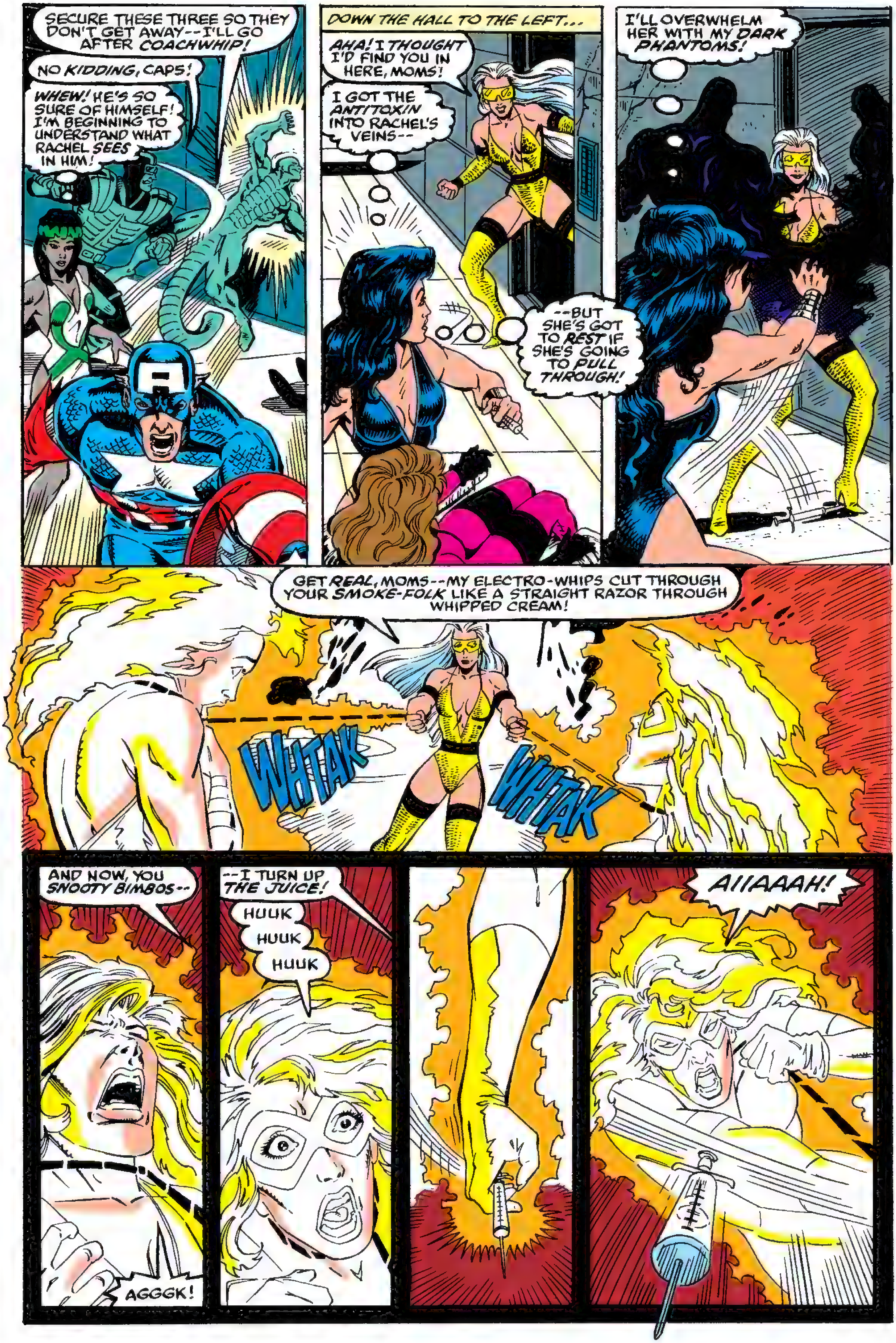

BUT YOU ARE TOO DANGEROUS TO--
DON'T BOTHER TO FINISH. I'VE HEARD IT BEFORE!
AND NOW, UNLESS YOU WANT ME TO HELP YOU FLOSS--
--CUT ME SOME SLACK!
HIS GRIP ON MY ARTIFICIAL LIMB--INCREDIBLE! COULDN'T BEAR TO HAVE IT WRENCHED FROM MY SOCKET AGAIN!*
NNNNN!
* CAP #313.--R.M.-LESS
YES!
HE'S LOOSENED HIS CONSTRICTION JUST ENOUGH...
...THAT I CAN SLIDE MY SHIELD-ARM FREE!
LIGHTS OUT, BUSHMASTER!
WHAM
WITH ANY LUCK HE'LL BE OUT FOR A WHILE.
NO POINT TYING HIM UP--THE BAD GUYS OBVIOUSLY ALREADY KNOW I'M HERE. MY BEST BET IS TO MOVE FAST BEFORE THEY CAN GET THEIR DEFENSES TOGETHER.
AFTER OPENING DOOR AFTER DOOR...
GOD AND COUNTRY!

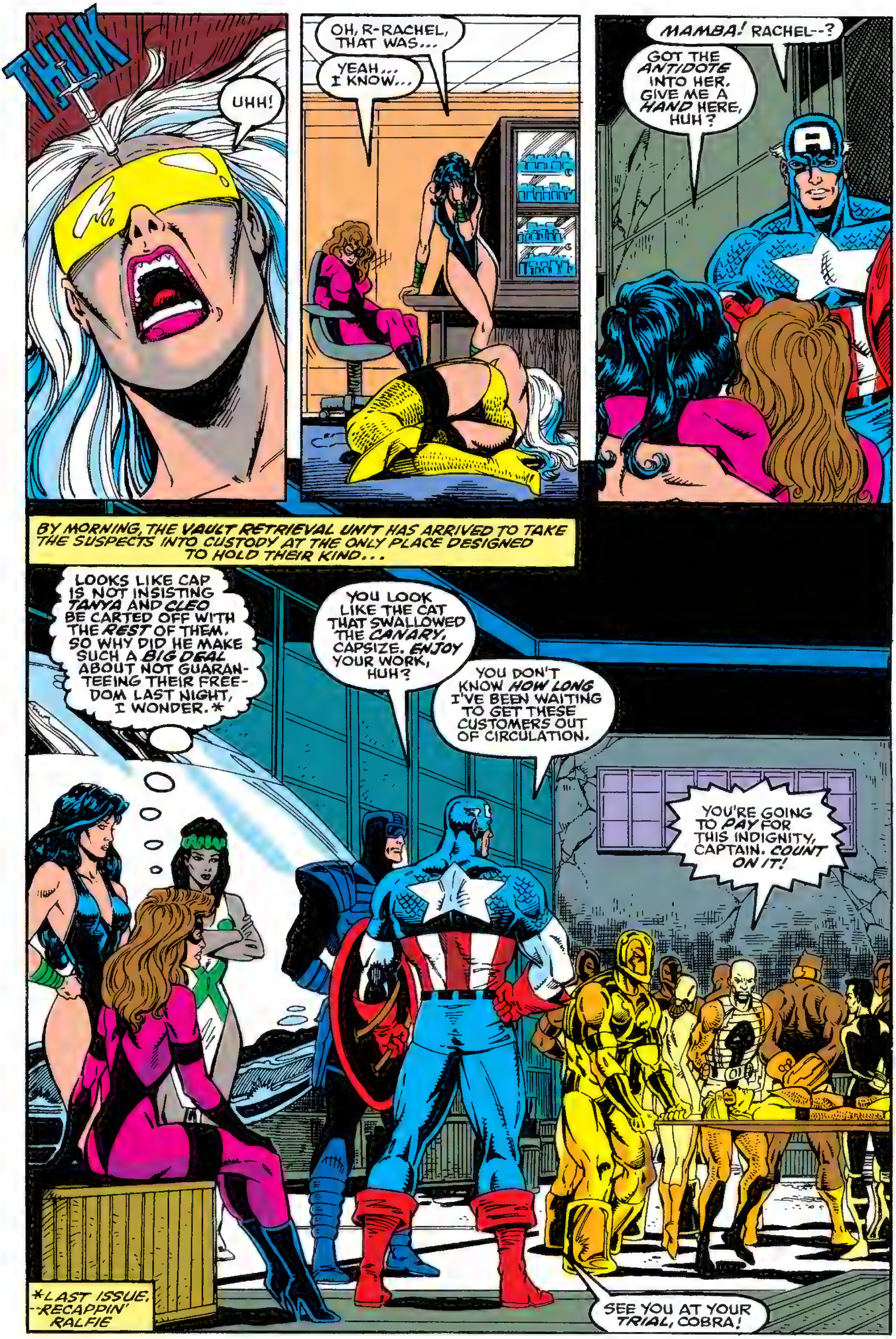

DIAMONDBACK *IS* HERE! BOUND AND GAGGED NEXT TO HER FRIENDS *ASP* AND *MAMBA*! AND THIS GUY-- *PALADIN*?
MMMFFFUHH!
EASY, FELLA-- I'LL HAVE YOU ALL--
WTANG
GGGHHH!
COBRA! HOW NICE OF YOU TO *DROP BY!*
IT'S *KING* COBRA NOW, YOU ACCURSED *INTERLOPER!*
WHOA! I'M IMPRESSED.
YOU GOT A NEW *THESAURUS*, RIGHT?
AND SPEAKING OF *RIGHTS*--!
DIDN'T SEE ME ADVANCE IN THE GLARE OF HIS *COBRA-BLASTERS!*
WHAK
I COULD TELL THAT DIDN'T LAND AS *SOLIDLY* AS I--
WHAT? *WHERE*--?
ONLY A *FOOL* WOULD TAKE YOU ON IN *FAIR COMBAT*, CAPTAIN. I'VE BEEN *MANY* THINGS IN MY DAY, BUT *FOOL* IS NOT AMONG THEM.
NOW THEN, DROP THE SHIELD GENTLY TO THE *FLOOR* OR THIS RANCID SACK OF *STREET MEAT* YOU CALL YOUR *GIRLFRIEND* WILL LOSE HER *HEAD* OVER YOU.

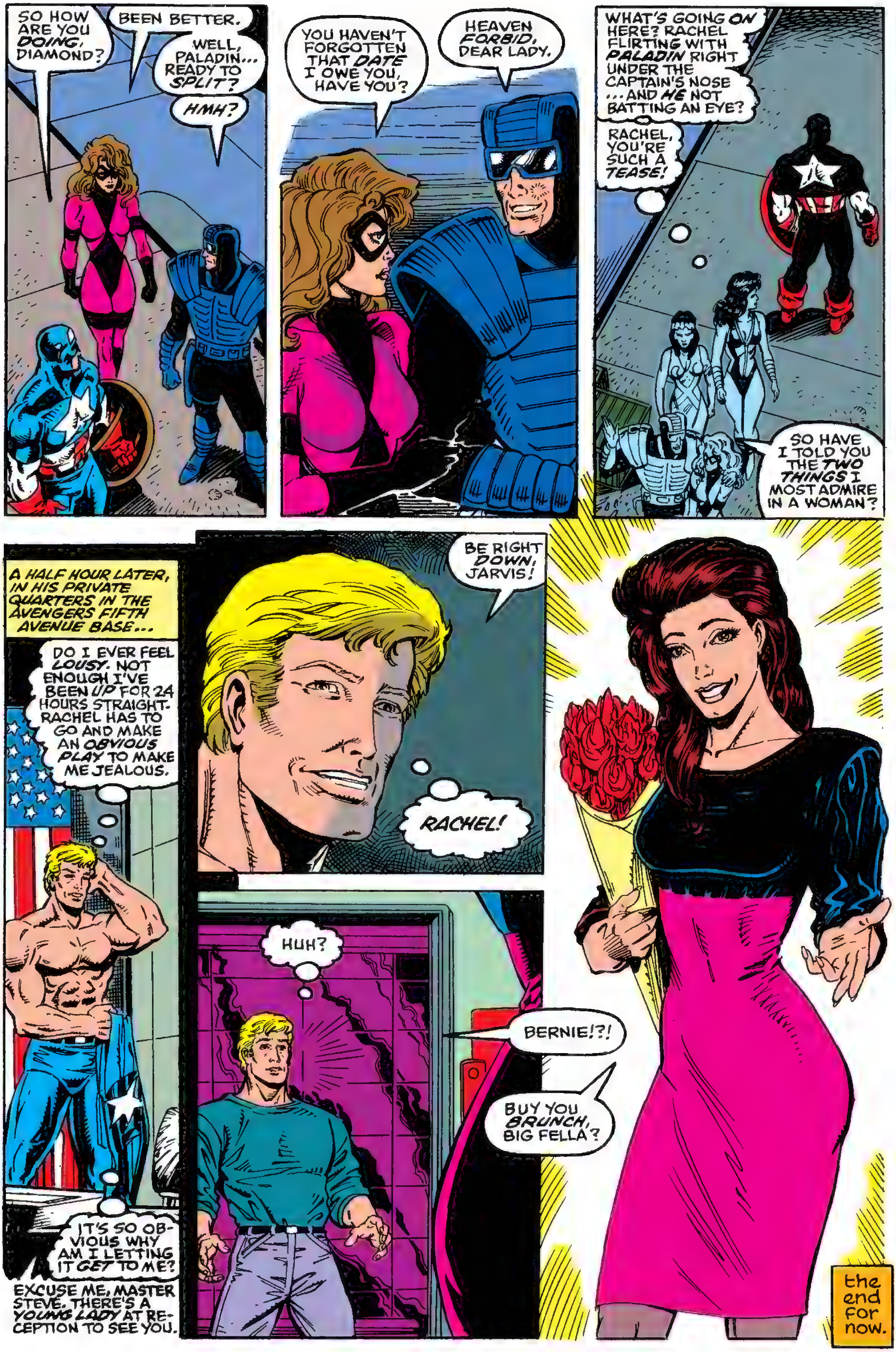

KILL HER, COBRA, AND I'LL SEE TO IT YOU REGRET IT FOR THE REST OF YOUR MISERABLE LIFE.
LIFE'S FULL OF REGRETS, CAPTAIN. NOW SIT ON THE FLOOR WITH YOUR HANDS UNDER YOUR BUTTOCKS!
OKAY, COBRA. BUT IF I WERE YOU I'D SERIOUSLY THINK ABOUT ESCAPE RIGHT NOW. THE REST OF THE AVENGERS ARE RIGHT OUTSIDE--
--IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING--
--AMONG THEM IS THOR. YOU DO REMEMBER THE GOD OF THUNDER DON'T YOU?
ULP.
WELL, HE'S GOT EVEN LESS PATIENCE NOW THAN HE--
COBRA?
HA! IF ONLY EVERYONE I FOUGHT WAS THAT EASY TO SPOOK!
DIAMOND... HOW YOU DOING?
I'LL HAVE YOU DOWN FROM THERE IN A SEC!
DIAMOND! WHAT'D THEY DO TO YOU?
THERE'S FROTH AT HER MOUTH!
YEAH, BOY SCOUT--SHE'S BEEN POISONED!
RIIP
GET ME DOWN QUICK!
LEGS TOO NUMB TO STAND JUST YET...
THE ANTIDOTE... WHERE CAN I FIND IT?
TOO HARD TO EXPLAIN. CUT ME LOOSE, CAPTAIN--I'LL TAKE YOU TO IT.
HURRY--DIAMOND'S MY FRIEND, TOO!


PALADIN -- FREE THE ASP. WE'RE GOING TO SEE TO DIAMONDBACK!
WHAT A TAKE-CHARGE PAIN-IN-THE--
LET'S HURRY, CAPTAIN! IT'S BEEN OVER AN HOUR SINCE RACHEL WAS POISONED!
IF I DIDN'T KNOW YOU TO BE A MAN OF HONOR, CAPTAIN, I'D SUSPECT THAT YOU LIED TO ME BEFORE! WE SCANNED THE IMMEDIATE PERIMETER, AND THERE ARE NO AVENGERS TO BE FOUND!
WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT "IMMEDIATE"?
GREAT. COBRA'S BROUGHT REINFORCEMENTS-- BLACK RACER, COACHWHIP, AND THE RATTLER.
SOCIETY--ON MY SIGNAL--!
HERE. GET DIAMOND TO THAT ANTIDOTE.
ATTACK!
I'LL CLEAR YOU A PATH!
HEY!
WHUPP
NGGHH! WHO--?
BDBDBDBDBDBDBDBDBD


ZASSP
AAAGK!
ASP--? UH... THANKS, LADY!
LOOK ALIVE, CAPSIZE -- COBRA'S SLITHERING OUT OF THAT MONKEY PILE BEHIND YOU!
YOU ARE NOT GOING TO WIN, CAPTAIN AMERICA! YOU HAVE NEVER BEATEN THE SERPENT SOCIETY-- NEVER! WE ARE THE AVENGERS OF THE UNDERWORLD!
GOT TO KEEP TWISTING-- MAKE SURE HE CAN'T SHOOT ONE OF HIS COBRA-BOMBS POINT BLANK!
HOLD HIM STILL --I'LL RATTLE HIS RIB-CAGE APART!
THUM
WHOOPS.
YOU'RE BETTER ORGANIZED THAN MOST OF THE COALITIONS OF CROOKS I GO UP AGAINST, BUT YOU'RE NO AVENGERS, COBRA--
--NOT BY A LONG SHOT!
NNNNNH.
WOHHHHL!

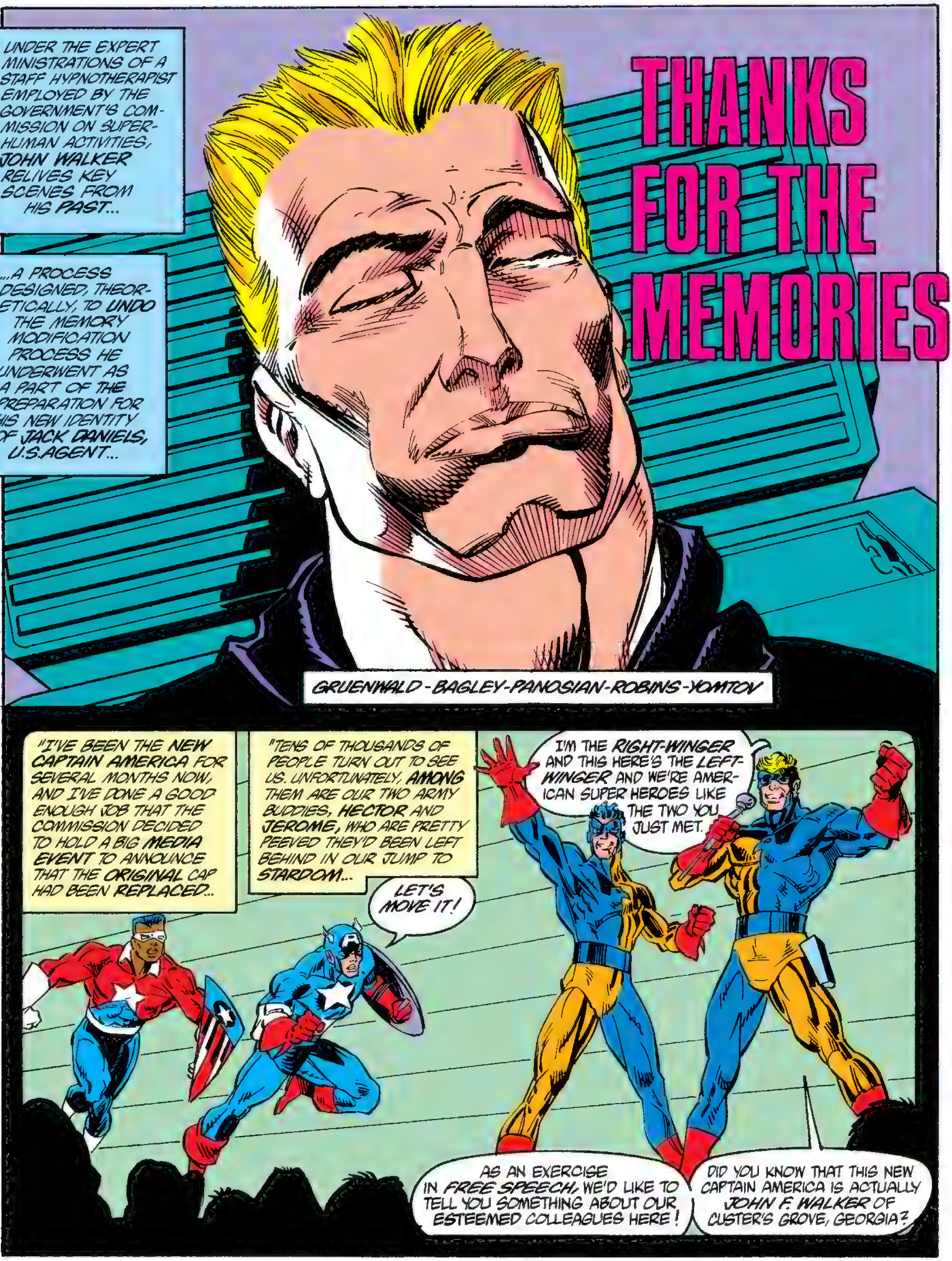

SECURE THESE THREE SO THEY DON'T GET AWAY--I'LL GO AFTER *COACHWHIP!*
NO *KIDDING*, CAPS!
WHEW! HE'S SO SURE OF HIMSELF! I'M BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT RACHEL *SEES* IN HIM!
DOWN THE HALL TO THE LEFT...
AHA! I *THOUGHT* I'D FIND YOU IN HERE, MOMS!
I GOT THE *ANTITOXIN* INTO RACHEL'S VEINS--
--BUT SHE'S GOT TO *REST* IF SHE'S GOING TO *PULL THROUGH!*
I'LL OVERWHELM HER WITH MY *DARK PHANTOMS!*
GET *REAL*, MOMS--MY ELECTRO-WHIPS CUT THROUGH YOUR *SMOKE-FOLK* LIKE A STRAIGHT RAZOR THROUGH WHIPPED CREAM!
WHTAK
WHTAK
AND NOW, YOU *SNOOTY BIMBOS*--
AGGGK!
--I TURN UP *THE JUICE!*
HUUK
HUUK
HUUK
AIIAAAH!

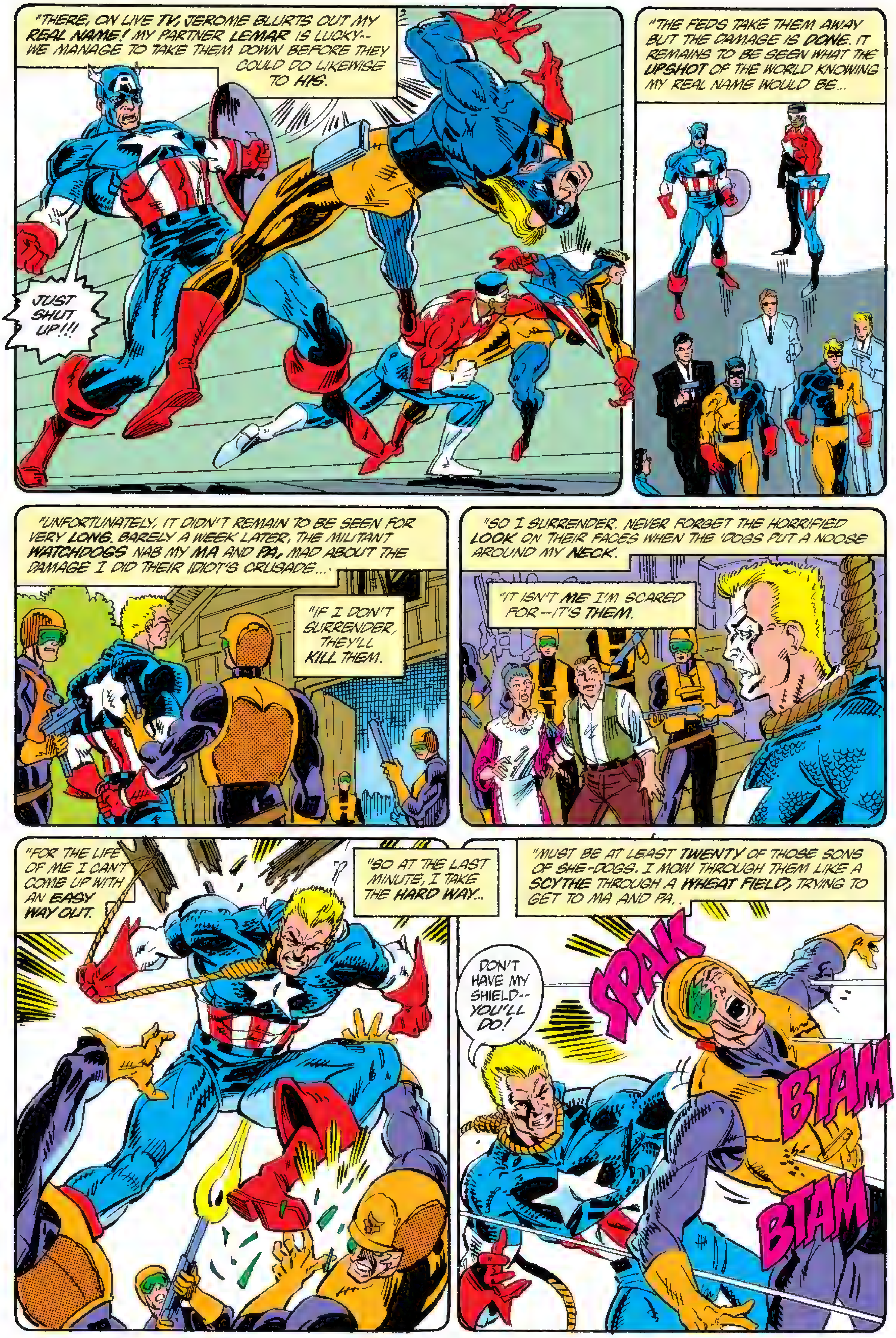

THUK
UHH!
OH, R-RACHEL, THAT WAS...
YEAH... I KNOW...
MAMBA! RACHEL--?
GOT THE ANTIDOTE INTO HER. GIVE ME A HAND HERE, HUH?
BY MORNING, THE VAULT RETRIEVAL UNIT HAS ARRIVED TO TAKE THE SUSPECTS INTO CUSTODY AT THE ONLY PLACE DESIGNED TO HOLD THEIR KIND...
LOOKS LIKE CAP IS NOT INSISTING TANYA AND CLEO BE CARTED OFF WITH THE REST OF THEM, SO WHY DID HE MAKE SUCH A BIG DEAL ABOUT NOT GUARANTEEING THEIR FREEDOM LAST NIGHT, I WONDER.*
YOU LOOK LIKE THE CAT THAT SWALLOWED THE CANARY, CAPSIZE. ENJOY YOUR WORK, HUH?
YOU DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I'VE BEEN WAITING TO GET THESE CUSTOMERS OUT OF CIRCULATION.
YOU'RE GOING TO PAY FOR THIS INDIGNITY, CAPTAIN. COUNT ON IT!
*LAST ISSUE. --RECAPPIN' RALFIE
SEE YOU AT YOUR TRIAL, COBRA!

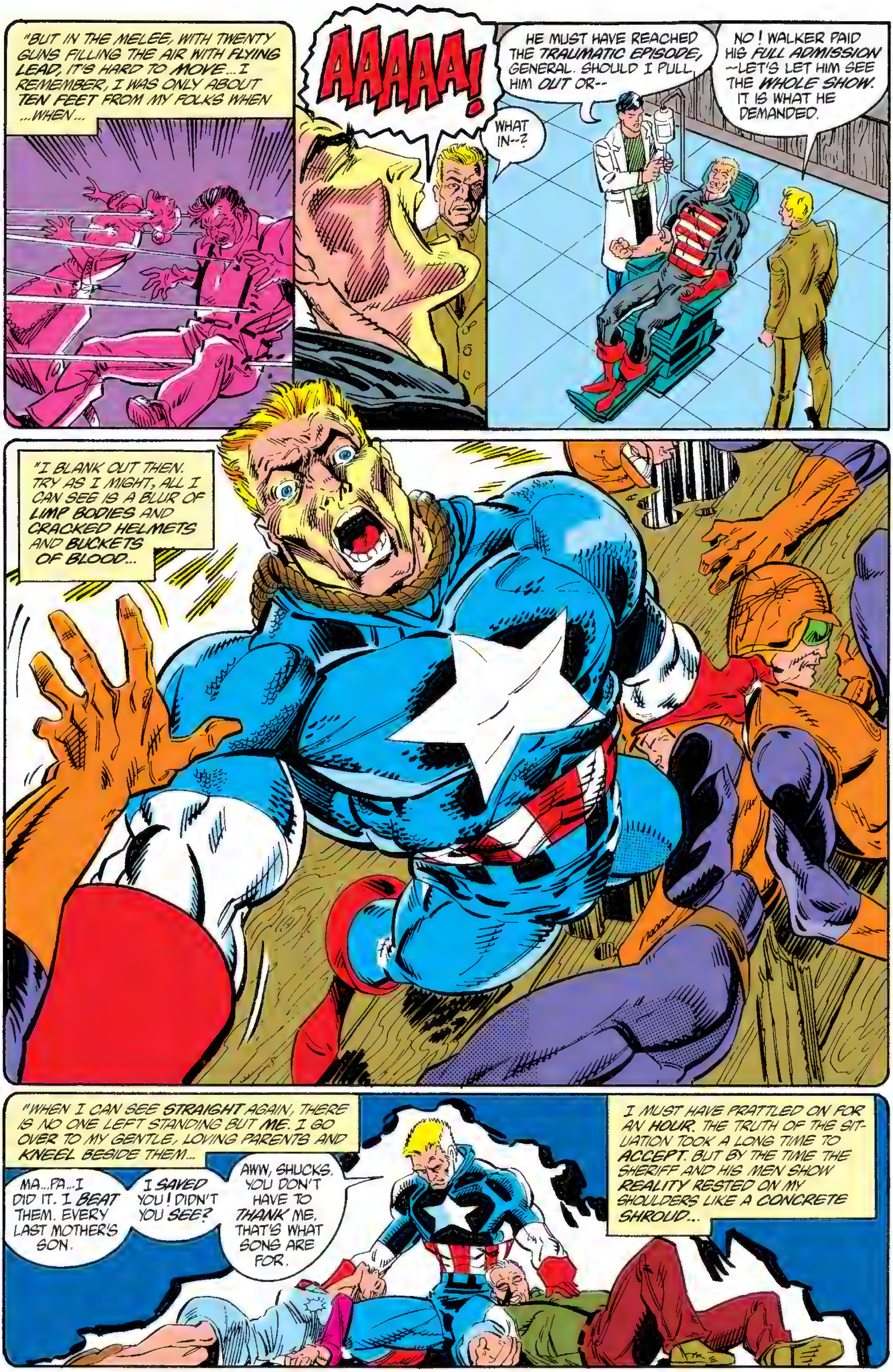

SO HOW ARE YOU *DOING*, DIAMOND?
BEEN BETTER.
WELL, PALADIN... READY TO *SPLIT*?
HMH?
YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN THAT *DATE* I OWE YOU, HAVE YOU?
HEAVEN *FORBID*, DEAR LADY.
WHAT'S GOING *ON* HERE? RACHEL FLIRTING WITH *PALADIN* RIGHT UNDER THE CAPTAIN'S NOSE ...AND *HE* NOT BATTING AN EYE?
RACHEL, YOU'RE SUCH A *TEASE!*
SO HAVE I TOLD YOU THE *TWO THINGS* I MOST ADMIRE IN A WOMAN?
A HALF HOUR LATER, IN HIS PRIVATE QUARTERS IN THE AVENGERS FIFTH AVENUE BASE...
DO I EVER FEEL *LOUSY*. NOT ENOUGH I'VE BEEN *UP* FOR 24 HOURS STRAIGHT-- RACHEL HAS TO GO AND MAKE AN *OBVIOUS PLAY* TO MAKE ME JEALOUS.
IT'S SO OBVIOUS WHY AM I LETTING IT *GET* TO ME?
EXCUSE ME, MASTER STEVE. THERE'S A *YOUNG LADY* AT RECEPTION TO SEE YOU.
BE RIGHT *DOWN*, JARVIS!
RACHEL!
HUH?
BERNIE!?!
BUY YOU *BRUNCH*, BIG FELLA?
the end for now.

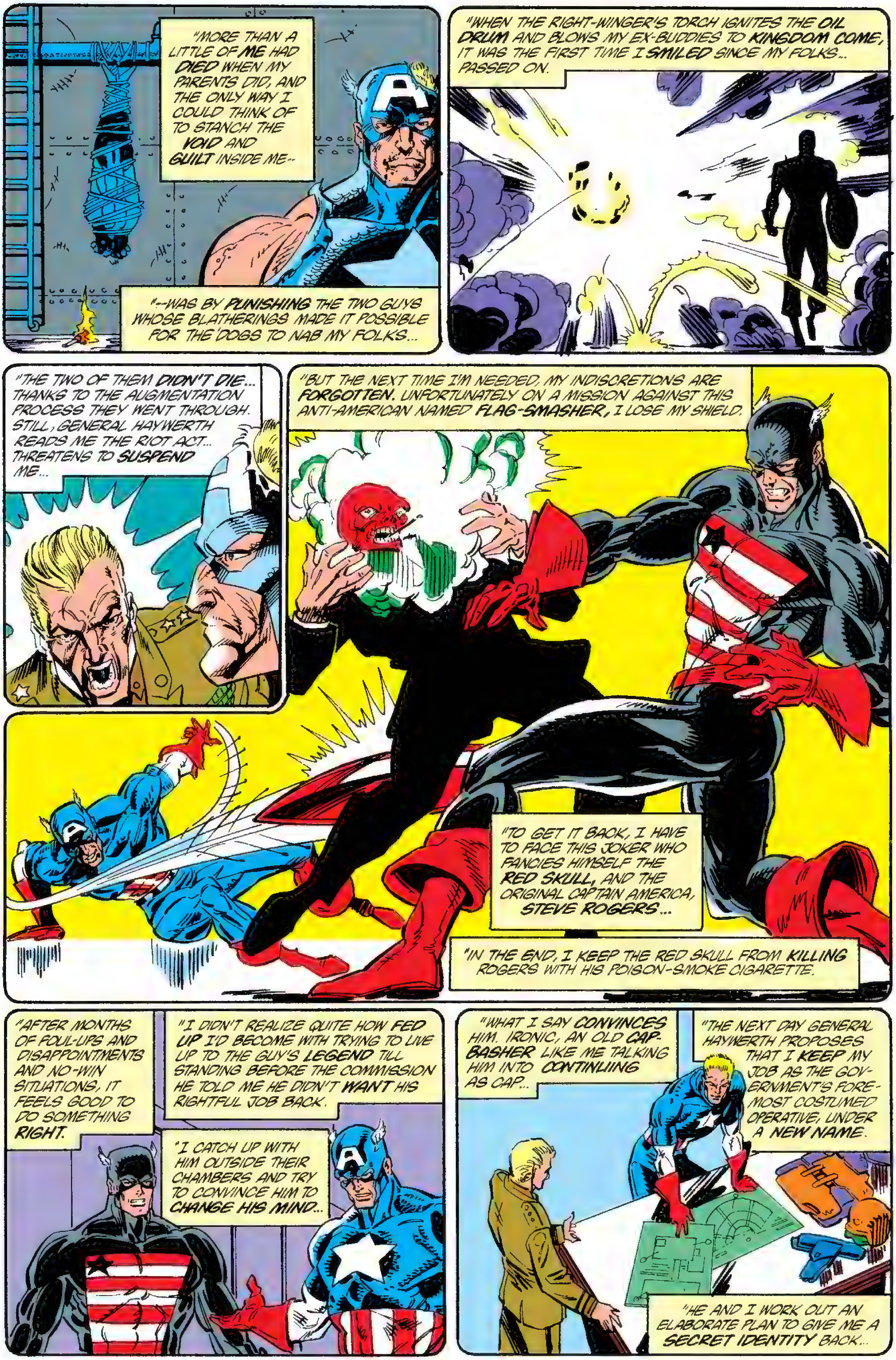
WHEN THE GOVERNMENT FORCED CAPTAIN AMERICA TO RESIGN, THERE WAS ONE MAN THEY DEEMED FIT TO REPLACE HIM. HIS NAME WAS ***JOHN WALKER,*** *AND HE BROUGHT HIS OWN BRAND OF PATRIOTISM TO THE JOB. WITH CAP'S RETURN, THE STRENGTH-AUGMENTED SUPER-PATRIOT ASSUMED A NEW GUISE, BECOMING THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S FOREMOST COSTUMED OPERATIVE! STAN LEE PRESENTS . . .*

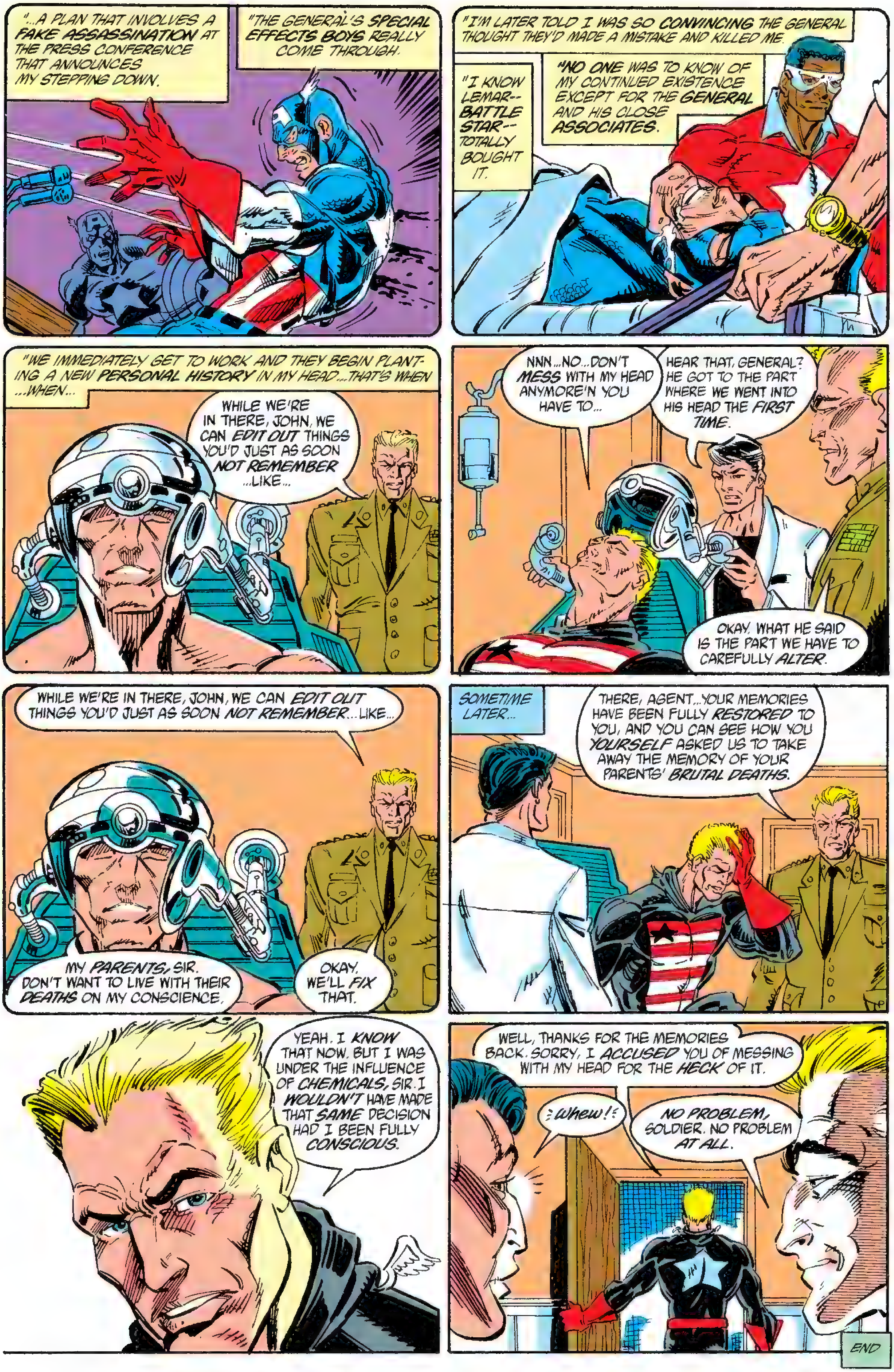
U.S.AGENT!


UNDER THE EXPERT MINISTRATIONS OF A STAFF HYPNOTHERAPIST EMPLOYED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMISSION ON SUPERHUMAN ACTIVITIES, JOHN WALKER RELIVES KEY SCENES FROM HIS PAST...
...A PROCESS DESIGNED, THEORETICALLY, TO UNDO THE MEMORY MODIFICATION PROCESS HE UNDERWENT AS A PART OF THE PREPARATION FOR HIS NEW IDENTITY OF JACK DANIELS, U.S.AGENT...
THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES
GRUENWALD-BAGLEY-PANOSIAN-ROBINS-YOMTOV
"I'VE BEEN THE NEW CAPTAIN AMERICA FOR SEVERAL MONTHS NOW, AND I'VE DONE A GOOD ENOUGH JOB THAT THE COMMISSION DECIDED TO HOLD A BIG MEDIA EVENT TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE ORIGINAL CAP HAD BEEN REPLACED...
"TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE TURN OUT TO SEE US. UNFORTUNATELY, AMONG THEM ARE OUR TWO ARMY BUDDIES, HECTOR AND JEROME, WHO ARE PRETTY PEEVED THEY'D BEEN LEFT BEHIND IN OUR JUMP TO STARDOM...
LET'S MOVE IT!
I'M THE RIGHT-WINGER AND THIS HERE'S THE LEFT-WINGER AND WE'RE AMERICAN SUPER HEROES LIKE THE TWO YOU JUST MET.
AS AN EXERCISE IN FREE SPEECH, WE'D LIKE TO TELL YOU SOMETHING ABOUT OUR ESTEEMED COLLEAGUES HERE!
DID YOU KNOW THAT THIS NEW CAPTAIN AMERICA IS ACTUALLY JOHN F. WALKER OF CUSTER'S GROVE, GEORGIA?


"THERE, ON LIVE TV, JEROME BLURTS OUT MY REAL NAME! MY PARTNER LEMAR IS LUCKY-- WE MANAGE TO TAKE THEM DOWN BEFORE THEY COULD DO LIKEWISE TO HIS.
JUST SHUT UP!!!
"THE FEDS TAKE THEM AWAY BUT THE DAMAGE IS DONE. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHAT THE UPSHOT OF THE WORLD KNOWING MY REAL NAME WOULD BE...
"UNFORTUNATELY, IT DIDN'T REMAIN TO BE SEEN FOR VERY LONG. BARELY A WEEK LATER, THE MILITANT WATCHDOGS NAB MY MA AND PA, MAD ABOUT THE DAMAGE I DID THEIR IDIOT'S CRUSADE...
"IF I DON'T SURRENDER, THEY'LL KILL THEM.
"SO I SURRENDER. NEVER FORGET THE HORRIFIED LOOK ON THEIR FACES WHEN THE 'DOGS PUT A NOOSE AROUND MY NECK.
"IT ISN'T ME I'M SCARED FOR--IT'S THEM.
"FOR THE LIFE OF ME I CAN'T COME UP WITH AN EASY WAY OUT.
"SO AT THE LAST MINUTE, I TAKE THE HARD WAY...
"MUST BE AT LEAST TWENTY OF THOSE SONS OF SHE-DOGS. I MOW THROUGH THEM LIKE A SCYTHE THROUGH A WHEAT FIELD, TRYING TO GET TO MA AND PA.
DON'T HAVE MY SHIELD-- YOU'LL DO!
SPAK
BTAM
BTAM


"BUT IN THE MELEE, WITH TWENTY GUNS FILLING THE AIR WITH FLYING LEAD, IT'S HARD TO MOVE... I REMEMBER, I WAS ONLY ABOUT TEN FEET FROM MY FOLKS WHEN ...WHEN...
AAAAA!
WHAT IN--?
HE MUST HAVE REACHED THE TRAUMATIC EPISODE, GENERAL. SHOULD I PULL HIM OUT OR--
NO! WALKER PAID HIS FULL ADMISSION --LET'S LET HIM SEE THE WHOLE SHOW. IT IS WHAT HE DEMANDED.
"I BLANK OUT THEN. TRY AS I MIGHT, ALL I CAN SEE IS A BLUR OF LIMP BODIES AND CRACKED HELMETS AND BUCKETS OF BLOOD...
"WHEN I CAN SEE STRAIGHT AGAIN, THERE IS NO ONE LEFT STANDING BUT ME. I GO OVER TO MY GENTLE, LOVING PARENTS AND KNEEL BESIDE THEM...
MA...PA...I DID IT. I BEAT THEM. EVERY LAST MOTHER'S SON.
I SAVED YOU! DIDN'T YOU SEE?
AWW, SHUCKS. YOU DON'T HAVE TO THANK ME. THAT'S WHAT SONS ARE FOR.
I MUST HAVE PRATTLED ON FOR AN HOUR. THE TRUTH OF THE SITUATION TOOK A LONG TIME TO ACCEPT. BUT BY THE TIME THE SHERIFF AND HIS MEN SHOW REALITY RESTED ON MY SHOULDERS LIKE A CONCRETE SHROUD...


"MORE THAN A LITTLE OF ME HAD DIED WHEN MY PARENTS DID, AND THE ONLY WAY I COULD THINK OF TO STANCH THE VOID AND GUILT INSIDE ME--
"--WAS BY PUNISHING THE TWO GUYS WHOSE BLATHERINGS MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE 'DOGS TO NAB MY FOLKS...
"WHEN THE RIGHT-WINGER'S TORCH IGNITES THE OIL DRUM AND BLOWS MY EX-BUDDIES TO KINGDOM COME, IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I SMILED SINCE MY FOLKS... PASSED ON.
"THE TWO OF THEM DIDN'T DIE... THANKS TO THE AUGMENTATION PROCESS THEY WENT THROUGH. STILL, GENERAL HAYWERTH READS ME THE RIOT ACT... THREATENS TO SUSPEND ME...
"BUT THE NEXT TIME I'M NEEDED, MY INDISCRETIONS ARE FORGOTTEN. UNFORTUNATELY ON A MISSION AGAINST THIS ANTI-AMERICAN NAMED FLAG-SMASHER, I LOSE MY SHIELD.
"TO GET IT BACK, I HAVE TO FACE THIS JOKER WHO FANCIES HIMSELF THE RED SKULL, AND THE ORIGINAL CAPTAIN AMERICA, STEVE ROGERS...
"IN THE END, I KEEP THE RED SKULL FROM KILLING ROGERS WITH HIS POISON-SMOKE CIGARETTE.
"AFTER MONTHS OF FOUL-UPS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS AND NO-WIN SITUATIONS, IT FEELS GOOD TO DO SOMETHING RIGHT.
"I DIDN'T REALIZE QUITE HOW FED UP I'D BECOME WITH TRYING TO LIVE UP TO THE GUY'S LEGEND TILL STANDING BEFORE THE COMMISSION HE TOLD ME HE DIDN'T WANT HIS RIGHTFUL JOB BACK.
"I CATCH UP WITH HIM OUTSIDE THEIR CHAMBERS AND TRY TO CONVINCE HIM TO CHANGE HIS MIND...
"WHAT I SAY CONVINCES HIM. IRONIC, AN OLD CAP-BASHER LIKE ME TALKING HIM INTO CONTINUING AS CAP...
"THE NEXT DAY GENERAL HAYWERTH PROPOSES THAT I KEEP MY JOB AS THE GOVERNMENT'S FOREMOST COSTUMED OPERATIVE, UNDER A NEW NAME.
"HE AND I WORK OUT AN ELABORATE PLAN TO GIVE ME A SECRET IDENTITY BACK...


"...A PLAN THAT INVOLVES A FAKE ASSASSINATION AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE THAT ANNOUNCES MY STEPPING DOWN.
"THE GENERAL'S SPECIAL EFFECTS BOYS REALLY COME THROUGH.
"I'M LATER TOLD I WAS SO CONVINCING THE GENERAL THOUGHT THEY'D MADE A MISTAKE AND KILLED ME.
"I KNOW LEMAR-- BATTLESTAR-- TOTALLY BOUGHT IT.
"NO ONE WAS TO KNOW OF MY CONTINUED EXISTENCE EXCEPT FOR THE GENERAL AND HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATES.
"WE IMMEDIATELY GET TO WORK AND THEY BEGIN PLANTING A NEW PERSONAL HISTORY IN MY HEAD...THAT'S WHEN ...WHEN...
WHILE WE'RE IN THERE, JOHN, WE CAN EDIT OUT THINGS YOU'D JUST AS SOON NOT REMEMBER ...LIKE...
NNN...NO...DON'T MESS WITH MY HEAD ANYMORE'N YOU HAVE TO...
HEAR THAT, GENERAL? HE GOT TO THE PART WHERE WE WENT INTO HIS HEAD THE FIRST TIME.
OKAY. WHAT HE SAID IS THE PART WE HAVE TO CAREFULLY ALTER.
WHILE WE'RE IN THERE, JOHN, WE CAN EDIT OUT THINGS YOU'D JUST AS SOON NOT REMEMBER...LIKE...
MY PARENTS, SIR. DON'T WANT TO LIVE WITH THEIR DEATHS ON MY CONSCIENCE.
OKAY. WE'LL FIX THAT.
SOMETIME LATER...
THERE, AGENT...YOUR MEMORIES HAVE BEEN FULLY RESTORED TO YOU, AND YOU CAN SEE HOW YOU YOURSELF ASKED US TO TAKE AWAY THE MEMORY OF YOUR PARENTS' BRUTAL DEATHS.
YEAH. I KNOW THAT NOW. BUT I WAS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF CHEMICALS, SIR. I WOULDN'T HAVE MADE THAT SAME DECISION HAD I BEEN FULLY CONSCIOUS.
WELL, THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES BACK. SORRY, I ACCUSED YOU OF MESSING WITH MY HEAD FOR THE HECK OF IT.
Whew!
NO PROBLEM, SOLDIER. NO PROBLEM AT ALL.
END

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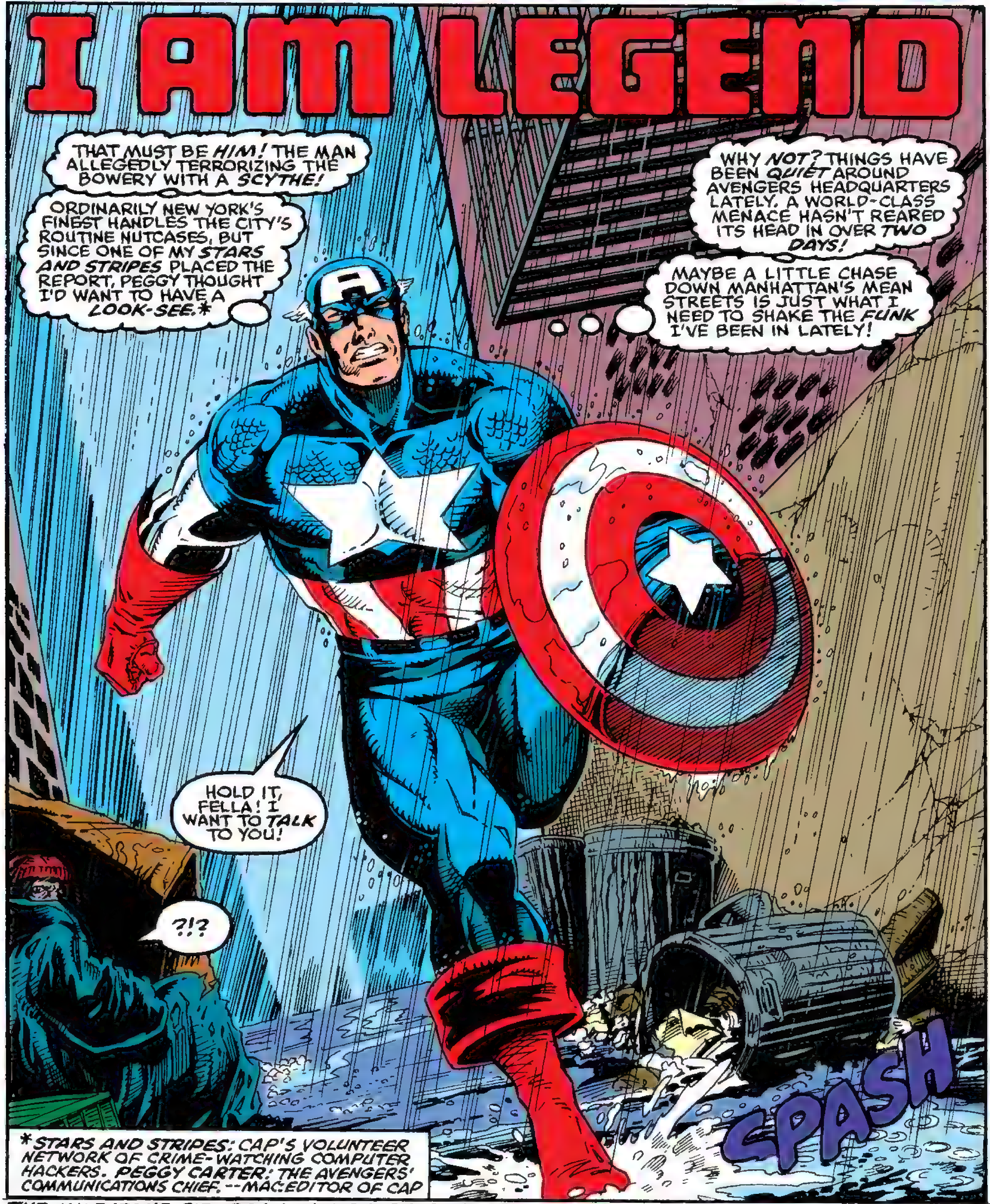
STEVE ROGERS . . . BORN IN THE U.S.A., RAISED TO CHERISH THE IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY, ENDOWED WITH A SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE, AND DRIVEN TO BE THE MOST CAPABLE COMBATANT IN THE WORLD. NOW AS BOTH LONE CRUSADER AND LEADER OF THE RENOWNED AVENGERS, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM!

Stan Lee PRESENTS:

CAPTAIN AMERICA!



I AM LEGEND

THAT MUST BE *HIM!* THE MAN ALLEGEDLY TERRORIZING THE BOWERY WITH A *SCYTHE!*
ORDINARILY NEW YORK'S FINEST HANDLES THE CITY'S ROUTINE NUTCASES, BUT SINCE ONE OF MY *STARS AND STRIPES* PLACED THE REPORT, PEGGY THOUGHT I'D WANT TO HAVE A *LOOK-SEE.**
WHY *NOT?* THINGS HAVE BEEN *QUIET* AROUND AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS LATELY. A WORLD-CLASS MENACE HASN'T REARED ITS HEAD IN OVER *TWO DAYS!*
MAYBE A LITTLE CHASE DOWN MANHATTAN'S MEAN STREETS IS JUST WHAT I NEED TO SHAKE THE *FUNK* I'VE BEEN IN LATELY!
HOLD IT, FELLA! I WANT TO *TALK* TO YOU!
?!?
CPASH
*STARS AND STRIPES: CAP'S VOLUNTEER NETWORK OF CRIME-WATCHING COMPUTER HACKERS. PEGGY CARTER: THE AVENGERS' COMMUNICATIONS CHIEF. --MAC EDITOR OF CAP

THE MILESTONE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE BROUGHT TO YOU BY...

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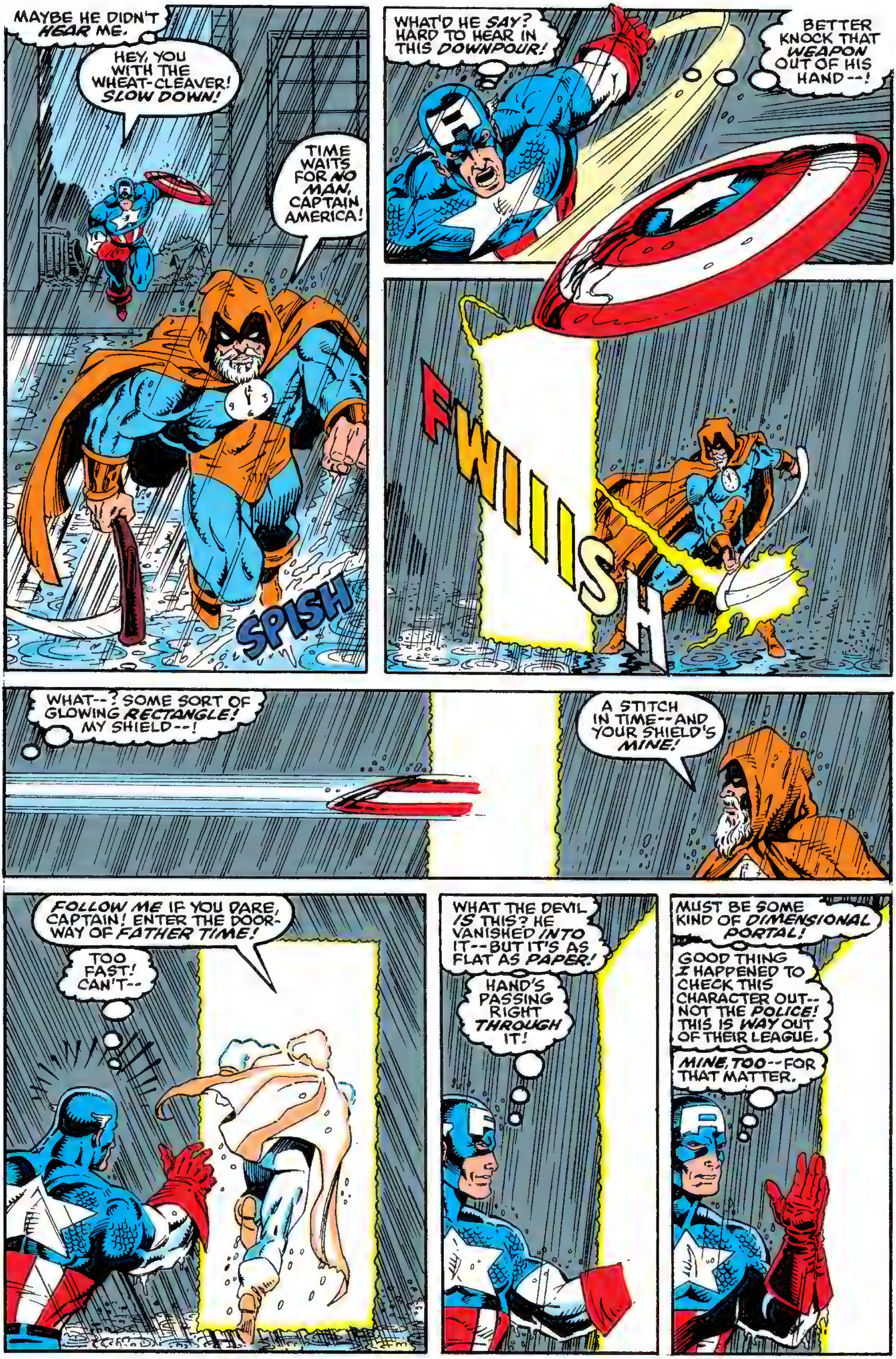
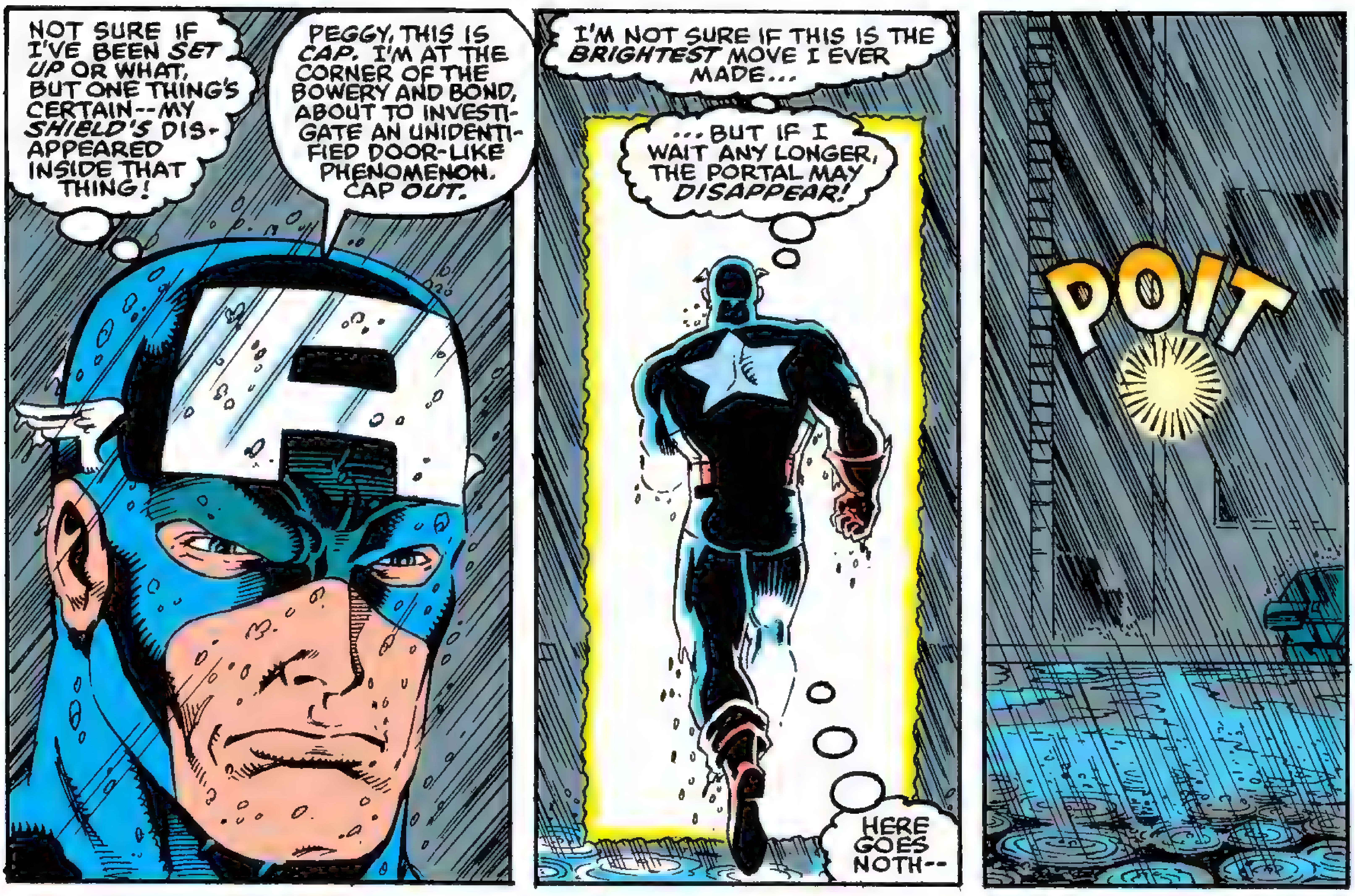
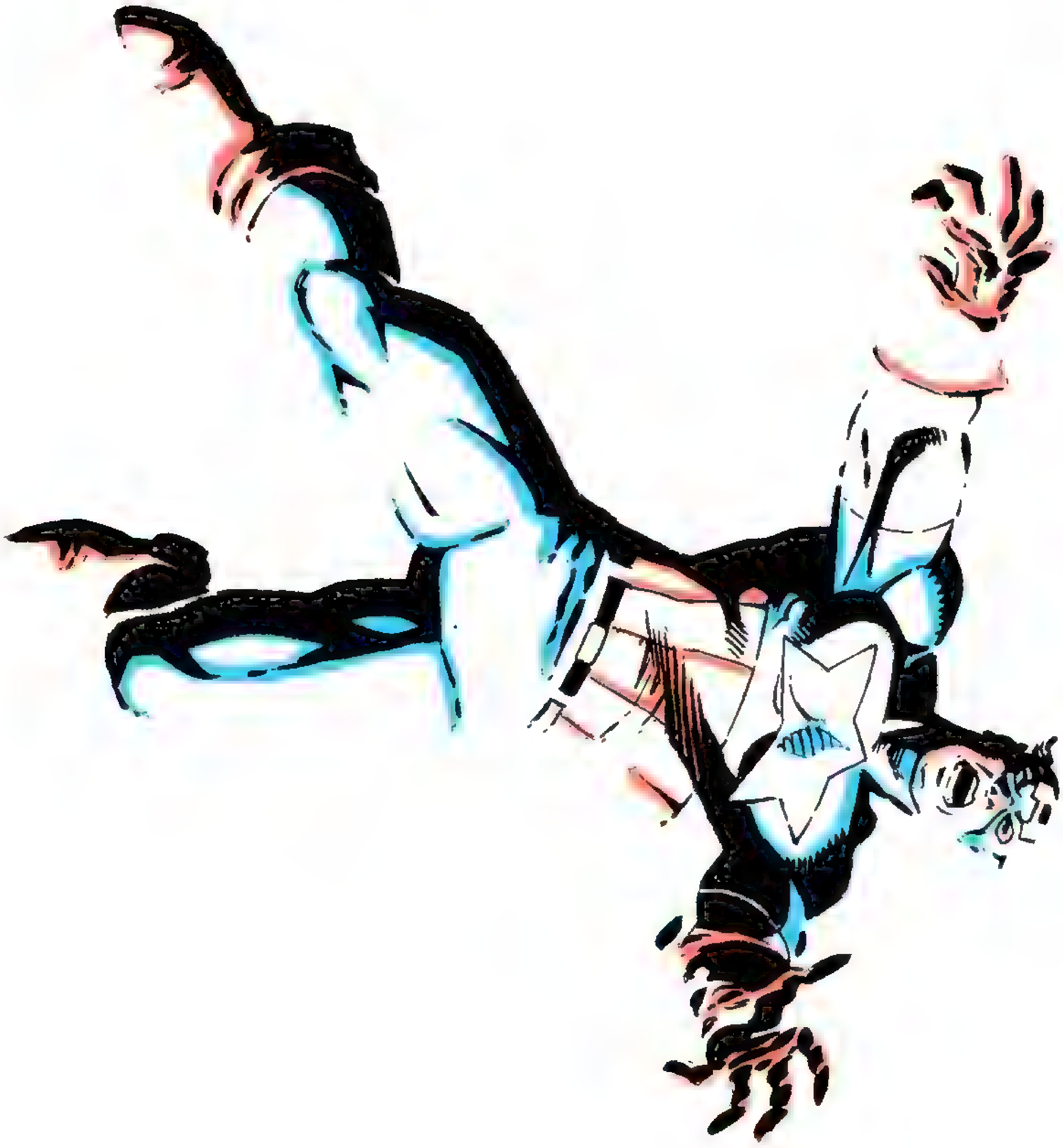
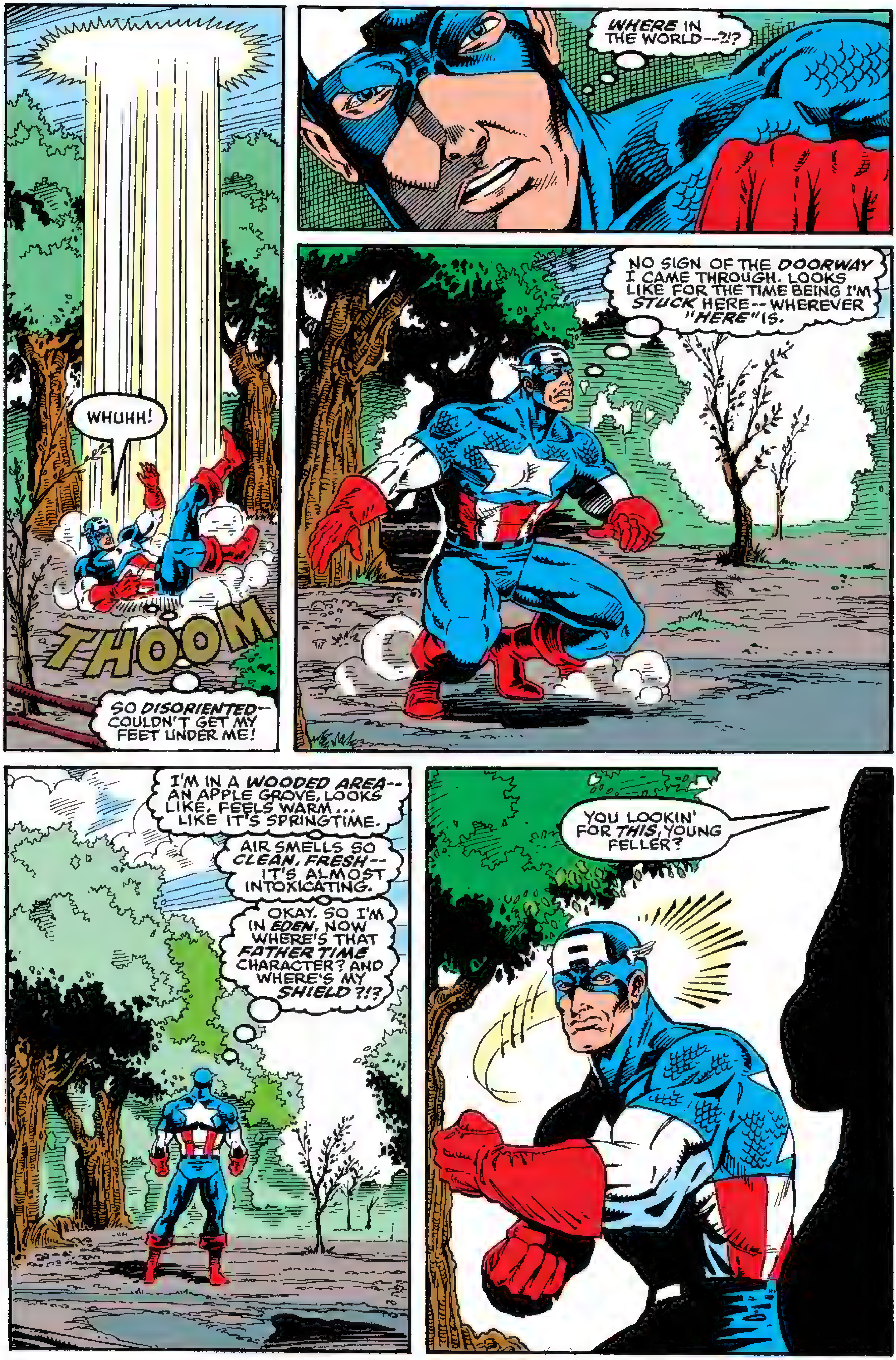
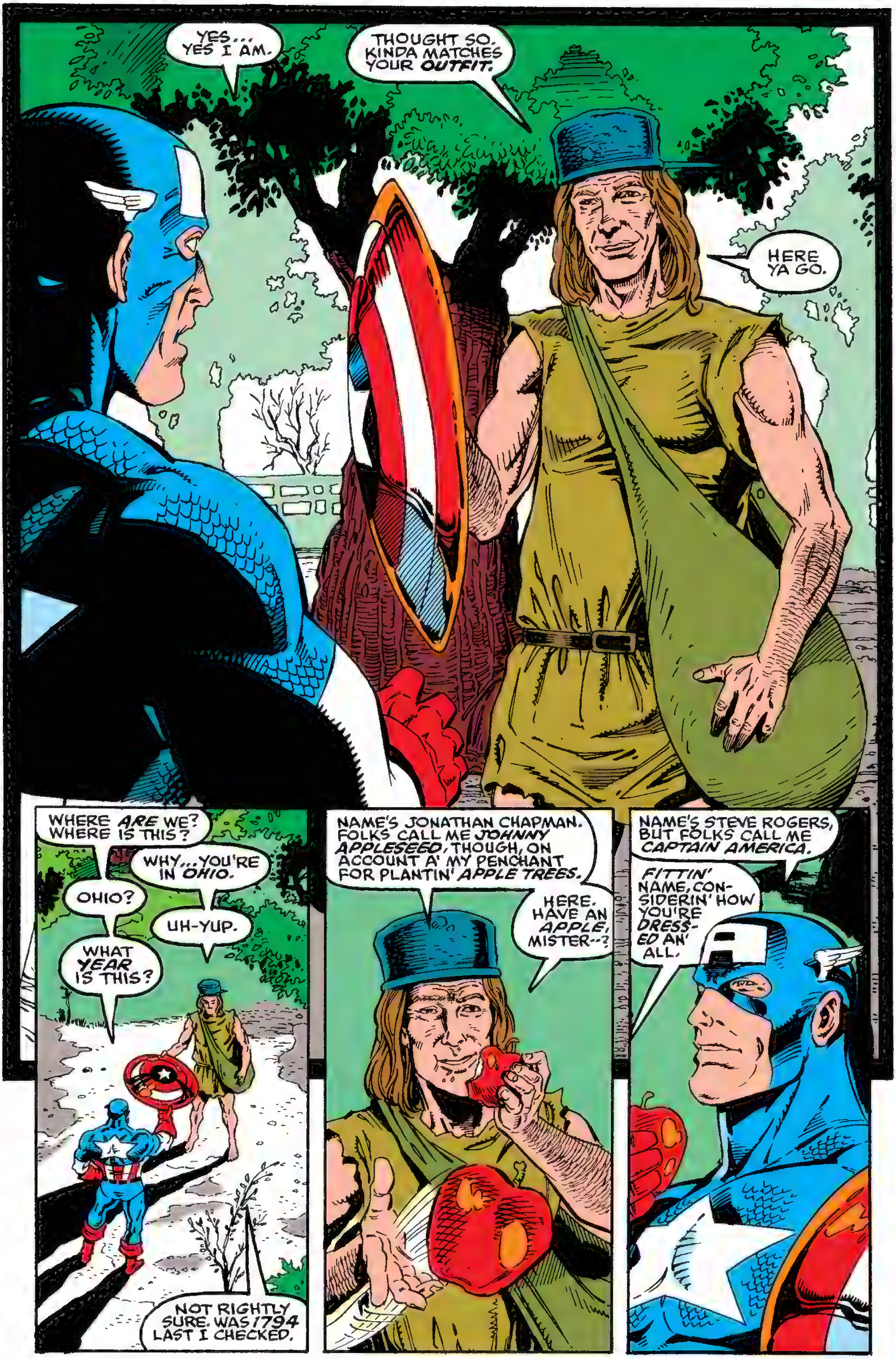
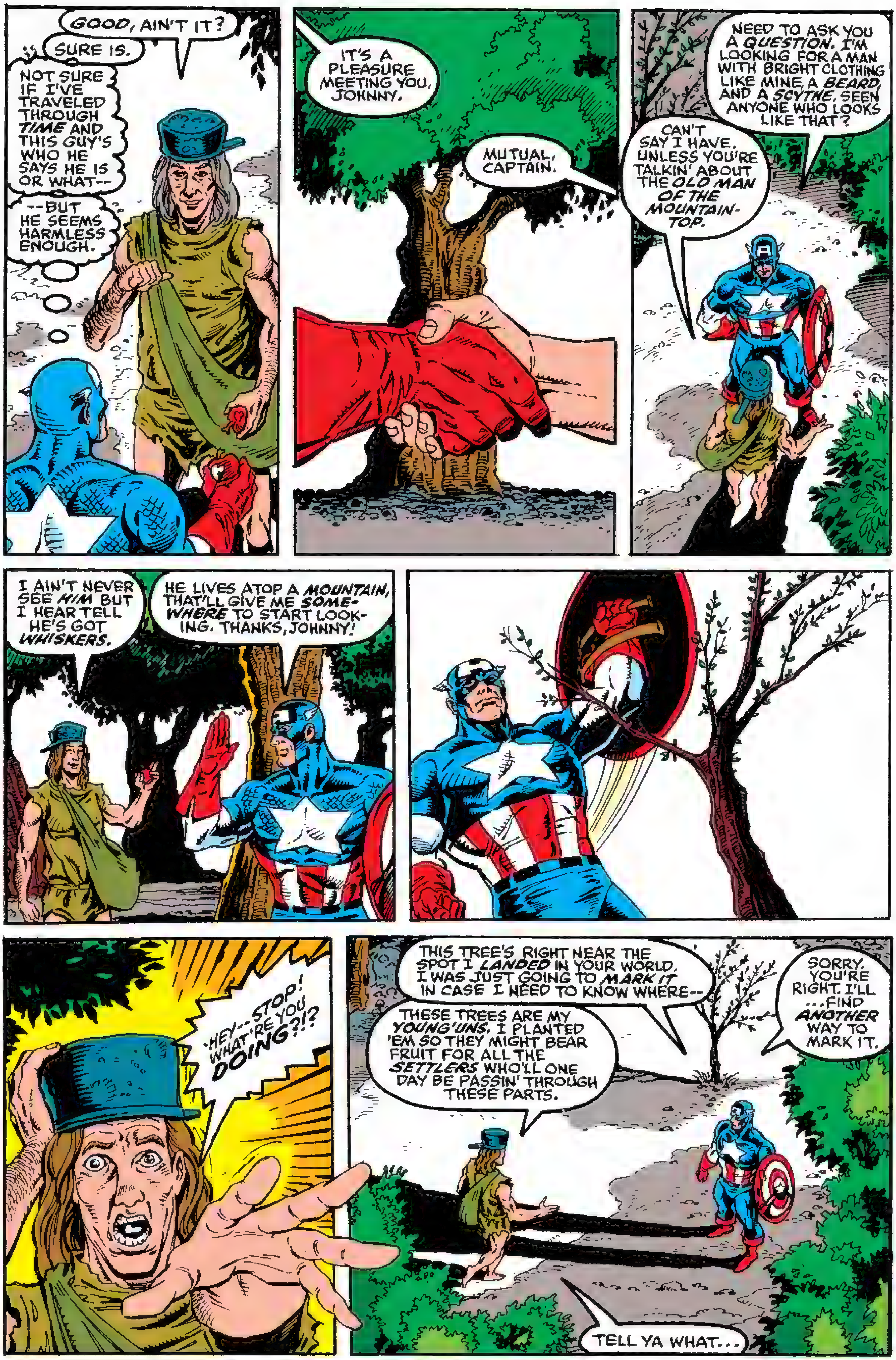

MAYBE HE DIDN'T *HEAR* ME.
HEY, YOU WITH THE WHEAT-CLEAVER! *SLOW DOWN!*
TIME WAITS FOR *NO MAN*, CAPTAIN AMERICA!
SPISH
WHAT'D HE *SAY?* HARD TO HEAR IN THIS *DOWNPOUR!*
BETTER KNOCK THAT *WEAPON* OUT OF HIS HAND--!
FWIIIISH
WHAT--? SOME SORT OF GLOWING *RECTANGLE!* MY SHIELD--!
A STITCH IN TIME--AND YOUR SHIELD'S *MINE!*
FOLLOW ME IF YOU DARE, CAPTAIN! ENTER THE DOORWAY OF *FATHER TIME!*
TOO FAST! CAN'T--
WHAT THE DEVIL *IS* THIS? HE VANISHED *INTO* IT--BUT IT'S AS FLAT AS *PAPER!*
HAND'S PASSING RIGHT *THROUGH* IT!
MUST BE SOME KIND OF *DIMENSIONAL PORTAL!*
GOOD THING *I* HAPPENED TO CHECK THIS CHARACTER OUT--NOT THE *POLICE!* THIS IS *WAY* OUT OF THEIR LEAGUE.
MINE, TOO--FOR THAT MATTER.

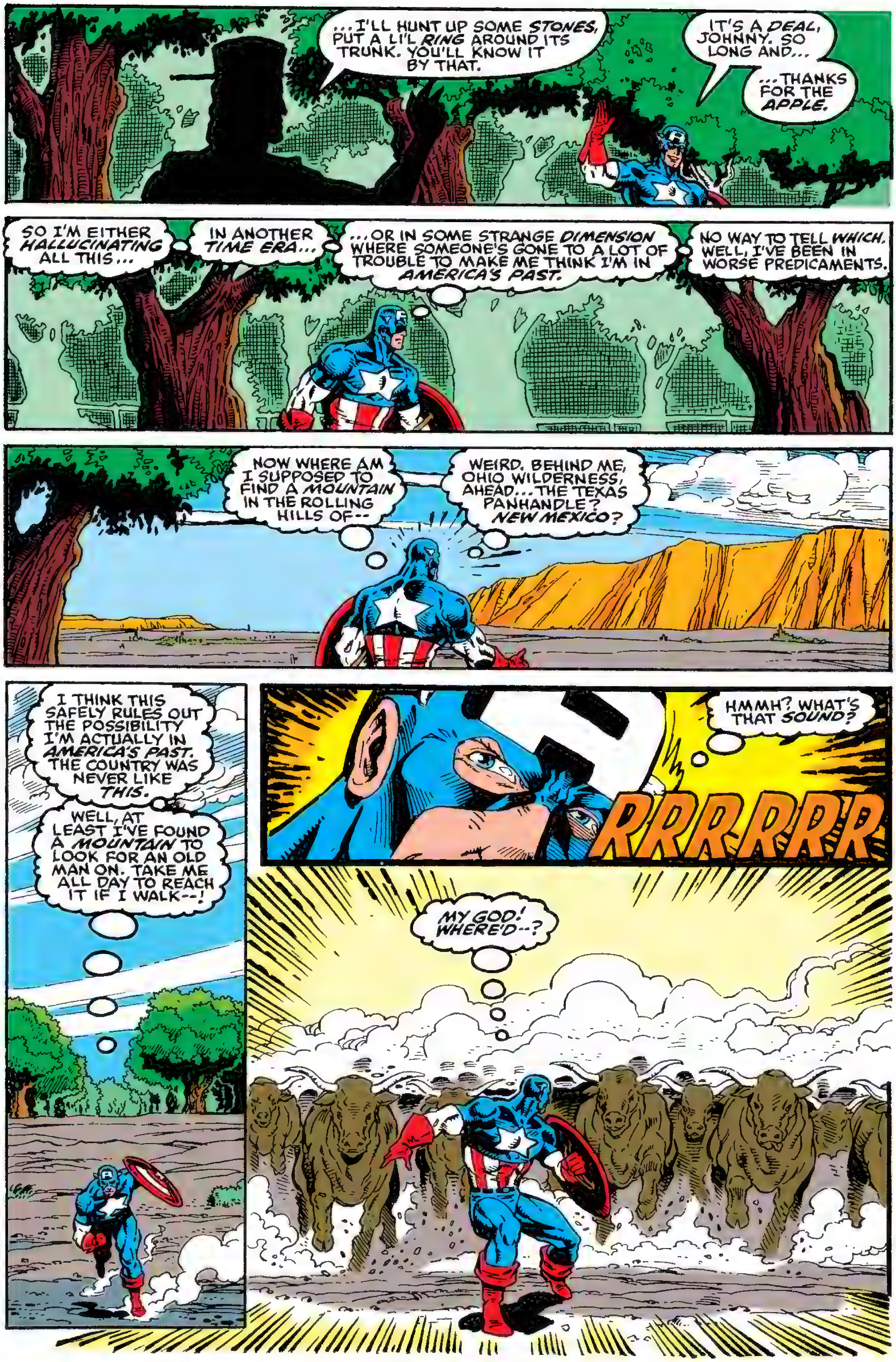

NOT SURE IF I'VE BEEN *SET UP* OR WHAT, BUT ONE THING'S CERTAIN--MY *SHIELD'S* DISAPPEARED INSIDE THAT THING!
PEGGY, THIS IS *CAP.* I'M AT THE CORNER OF THE BOWERY AND BOND, ABOUT TO INVESTIGATE AN UNIDENTIFIED DOOR-LIKE PHENOMENON. CAP *OUT.*
I'M NOT SURE IF THIS IS THE *BRIGHTEST* MOVE I EVER MADE...
...BUT IF I WAIT ANY LONGER, THE PORTAL MAY *DISAPPEAR!*
HERE GOES NOTH--
POIT

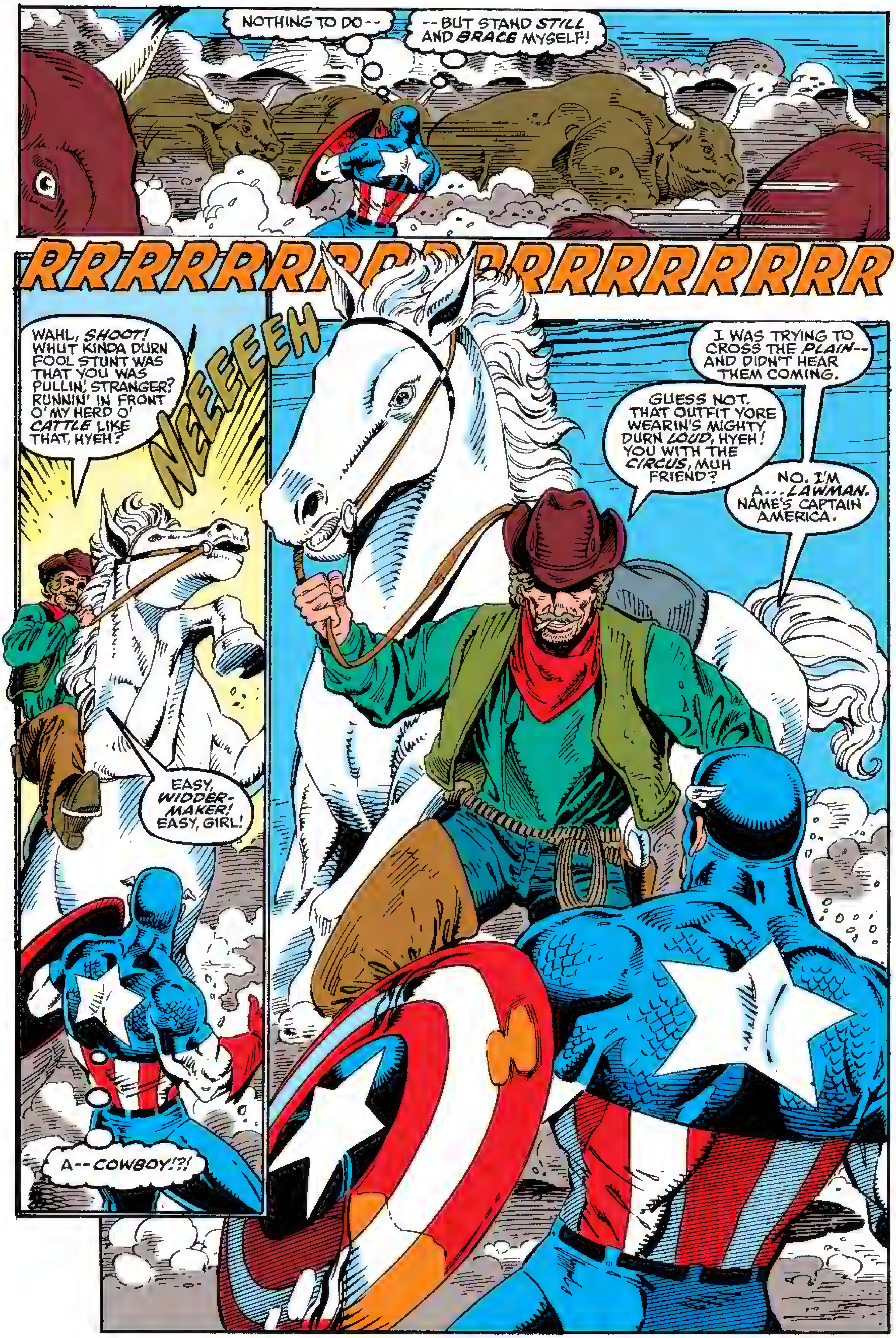


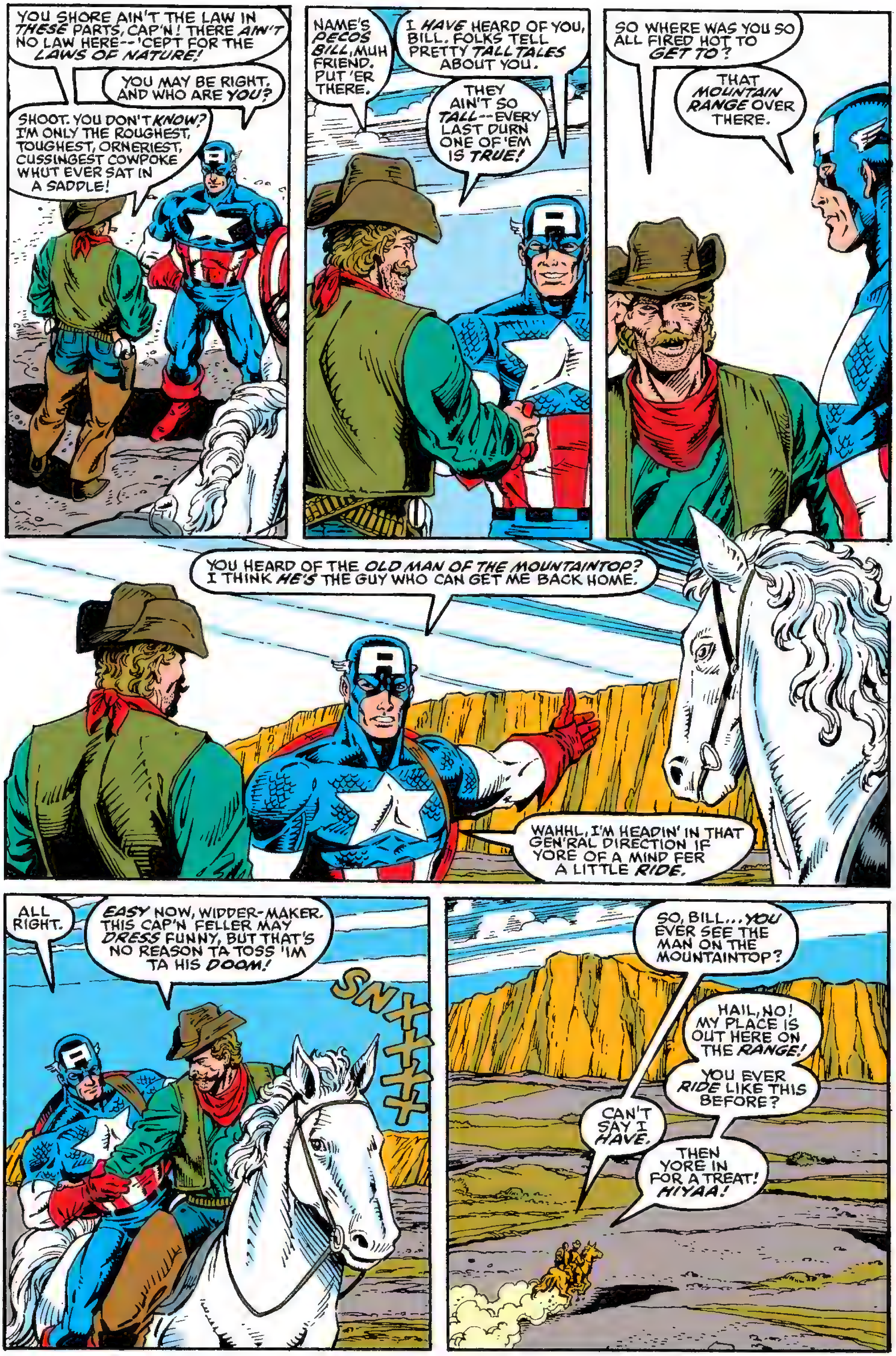

WHUHH!
THOOM
SO *DISORIENTED*--COULDN'T GET MY FEET UNDER ME!
WHERE IN THE WORLD--?!?
NO SIGN OF THE *DOORWAY* I CAME THROUGH. LOOKS LIKE FOR THE TIME BEING I'M *STUCK* HERE--WHEREVER *"HERE"* IS.
I'M IN A *WOODED AREA*--AN APPLE GROVE, LOOKS LIKE. FEELS WARM... LIKE IT'S SPRINGTIME.
AIR SMELLS SO *CLEAN, FRESH*--IT'S ALMOST INTOXICATING.
OKAY. SO I'M IN *EDEN*. NOW WHERE'S THAT *FATHER TIME* CHARACTER? AND WHERE'S MY *SHIELD*?!?
YOU LOOKIN' FOR *THIS*, YOUNG FELLER?

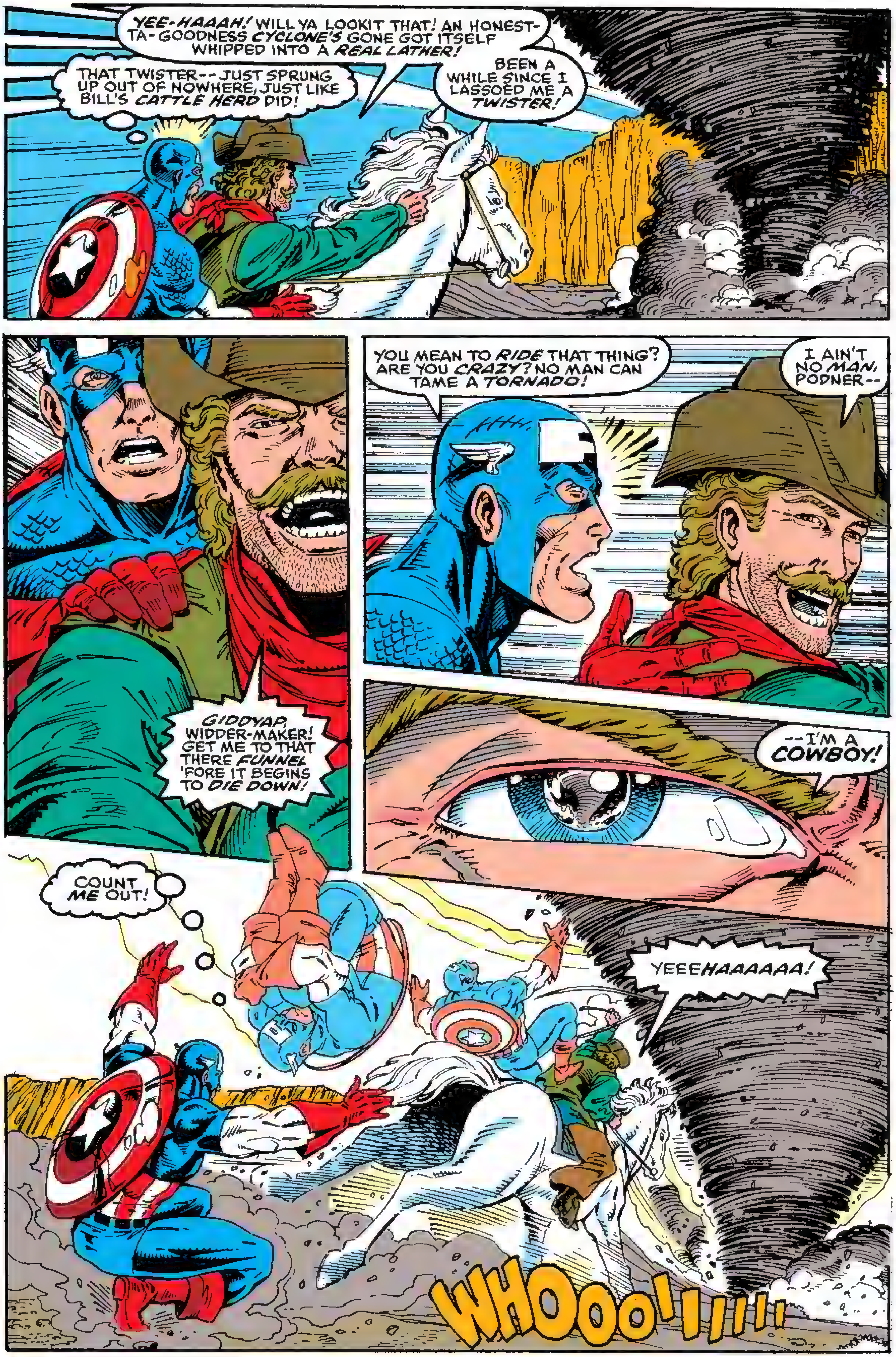

YES... YES I AM.
THOUGHT SO. KINDA MATCHES YOUR *OUTFIT.*
HERE YA GO.
WHERE *ARE* WE? WHERE IS THIS?
WHY...YOU'RE IN *OHIO.*
OHIO?
UH-YUP.
WHAT *YEAR* IS THIS?
NOT RIGHTLY SURE. WAS *1794* LAST I CHECKED.
NAME'S JONATHAN CHAPMAN. FOLKS CALL ME *JOHNNY APPLESEED,* THOUGH, ON ACCOUNT A' MY PENCHANT FOR PLANTIN' *APPLE TREES.*
HERE. HAVE AN *APPLE,* MISTER--?
NAME'S STEVE ROGERS, BUT FOLKS CALL ME *CAPTAIN AMERICA.*
FITTIN' NAME, CONSIDERIN' HOW YOU'RE *DRESSED* AN' ALL.

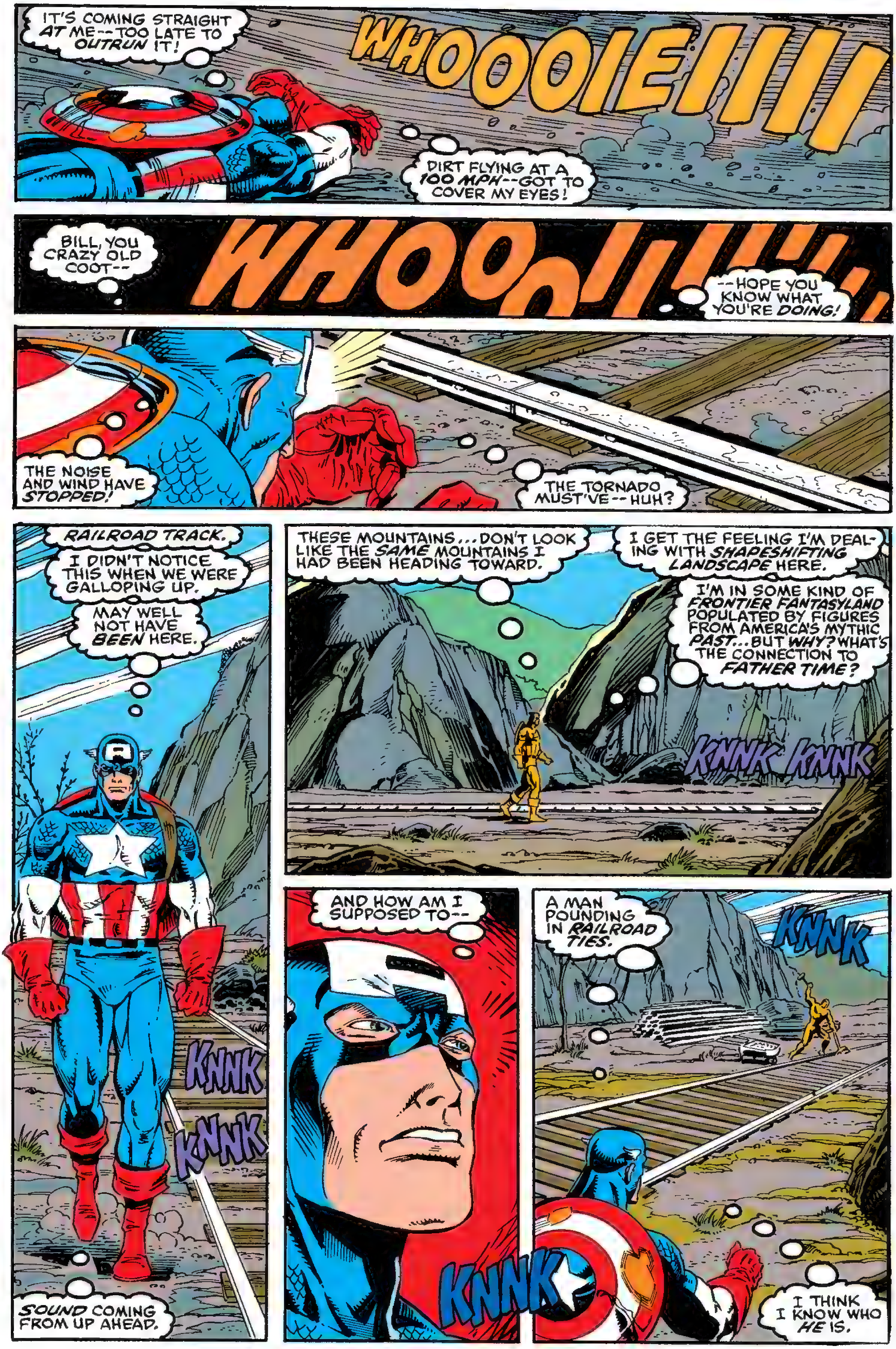

GOOD, AIN'T IT?
SURE IS.
NOT SURE IF I'VE TRAVELED THROUGH TIME AND THIS GUY'S WHO HE SAYS HE IS OR WHAT--
--BUT HE SEEMS HARMLESS ENOUGH.
IT'S A PLEASURE MEETING YOU, JOHNNY.
MUTUAL, CAPTAIN.
NEED TO ASK YOU A QUESTION. I'M LOOKING FOR A MAN WITH BRIGHT CLOTHING LIKE MINE, A BEARD, AND A SCYTHE. SEEN ANYONE WHO LOOKS LIKE THAT?
CAN'T SAY I HAVE. UNLESS YOU'RE TALKIN' ABOUT THE OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN-TOP.
I AIN'T NEVER SEE HIM BUT I HEAR TELL HE'S GOT WHISKERS.
HE LIVES ATOP A MOUNTAIN, THAT'LL GIVE ME SOMEWHERE TO START LOOKING. THANKS, JOHNNY!
HEY-- STOP! WHAT'RE YOU DOING?!?
THIS TREE'S RIGHT NEAR THE SPOT I LANDED IN YOUR WORLD. I WAS JUST GOING TO MARK IT IN CASE I NEED TO KNOW WHERE--
THESE TREES ARE MY YOUNG'UNS. I PLANTED 'EM SO THEY MIGHT BEAR FRUIT FOR ALL THE SETTLERS WHO'LL ONE DAY BE PASSIN' THROUGH THESE PARTS.
SORRY. YOU'RE RIGHT. I'LL ...FIND ANOTHER WAY TO MARK IT.
TELL YA WHAT...


...I'LL HUNT UP SOME *STONES*, PUT A LI'L *RING* AROUND ITS TRUNK. YOU'LL KNOW IT BY THAT.
IT'S A *DEAL*, JOHNNY. SO LONG AND...
...THANKS FOR THE *APPLE*.
SO I'M EITHER *HALLUCINATING* ALL THIS...
IN ANOTHER *TIME ERA*...
...OR IN SOME STRANGE *DIMENSION* WHERE SOMEONE'S GONE TO A LOT OF TROUBLE TO MAKE ME THINK I'M IN *AMERICA'S PAST*.
NO WAY TO TELL *WHICH*. WELL, I'VE BEEN IN WORSE PREDICAMENTS.
NOW WHERE AM I SUPPOSED TO FIND A *MOUNTAIN* IN THE ROLLING HILLS OF--
WEIRD. BEHIND ME, OHIO WILDERNESS, AHEAD...THE TEXAS PANHANDLE? *NEW MEXICO*?
I THINK THIS SAFELY RULES OUT THE POSSIBILITY I'M ACTUALLY IN *AMERICA'S PAST*. THE COUNTRY WAS NEVER LIKE *THIS*.
WELL, AT LEAST I'VE FOUND A *MOUNTAIN* TO LOOK FOR AN OLD MAN ON. TAKE ME ALL DAY TO REACH IT IF I WALK--!
HMMH? WHAT'S THAT *SOUND*?
RRRRRR
MY GOD! WHERE'D--?

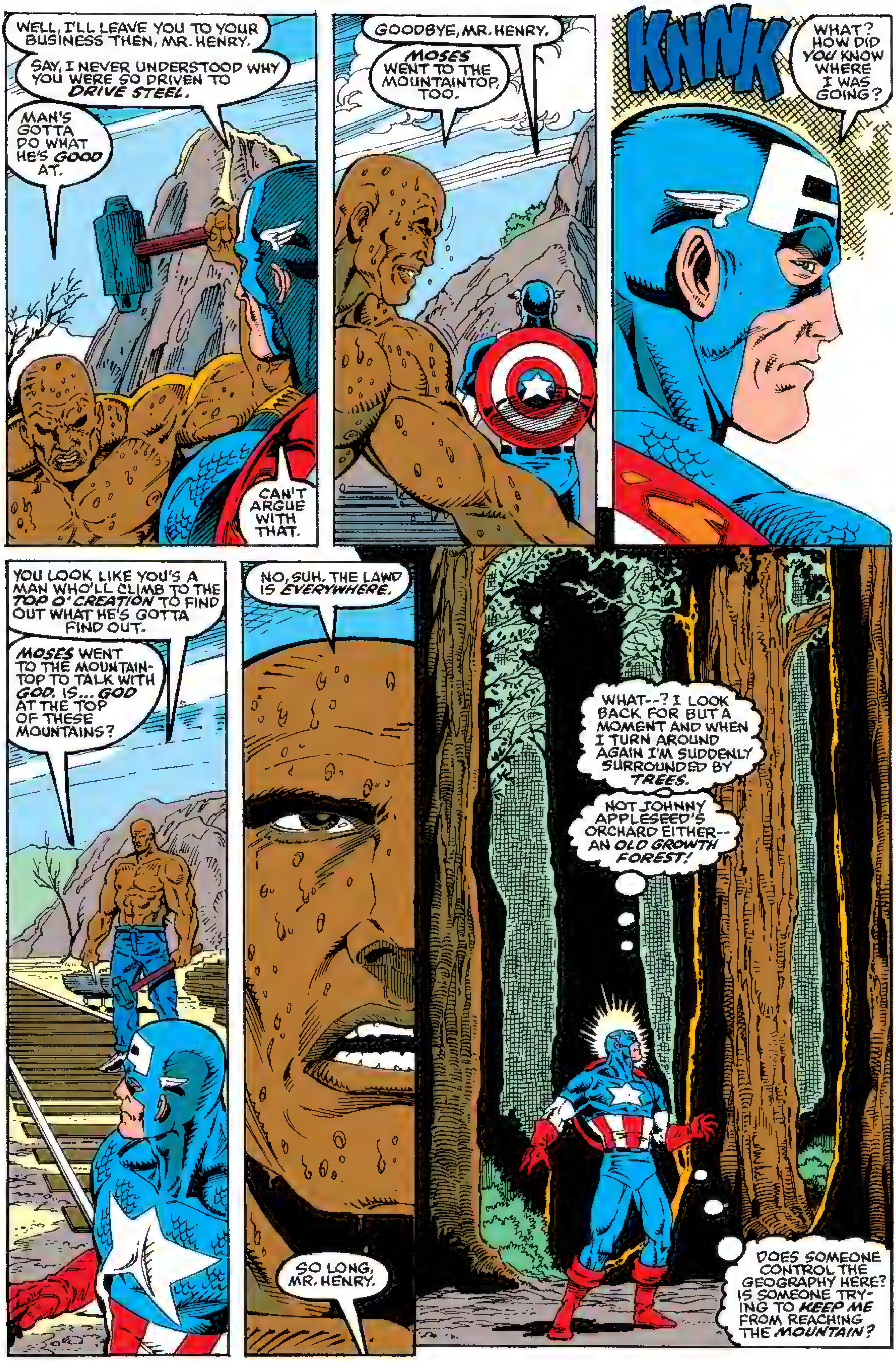

NOTHING TO DO--
--BUT STAND STILL AND BRACE MYSELF!
RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR
WAHL, SHOOT! WHUT KINDA DURN FOOL STUNT WAS THAT YOU WAS PULLIN', STRANGER? RUNNIN' IN FRONT O' MY HERD O' CATTLE LIKE THAT, HYEH?
NEEEEEH
EASY, WIDDER-MAKER! EASY, GIRL!
A--COWBOY!?!
I WAS TRYING TO CROSS THE PLAIN-- AND DIDN'T HEAR THEM COMING.
GUESS NOT. THAT OUTFIT YORE WEARIN'S MIGHTY DURN LOUD, HYEH! YOU WITH THE CIRCUS, MUH FRIEND?
NO. I'M A...LAWMAN. NAME'S CAPTAIN AMERICA.

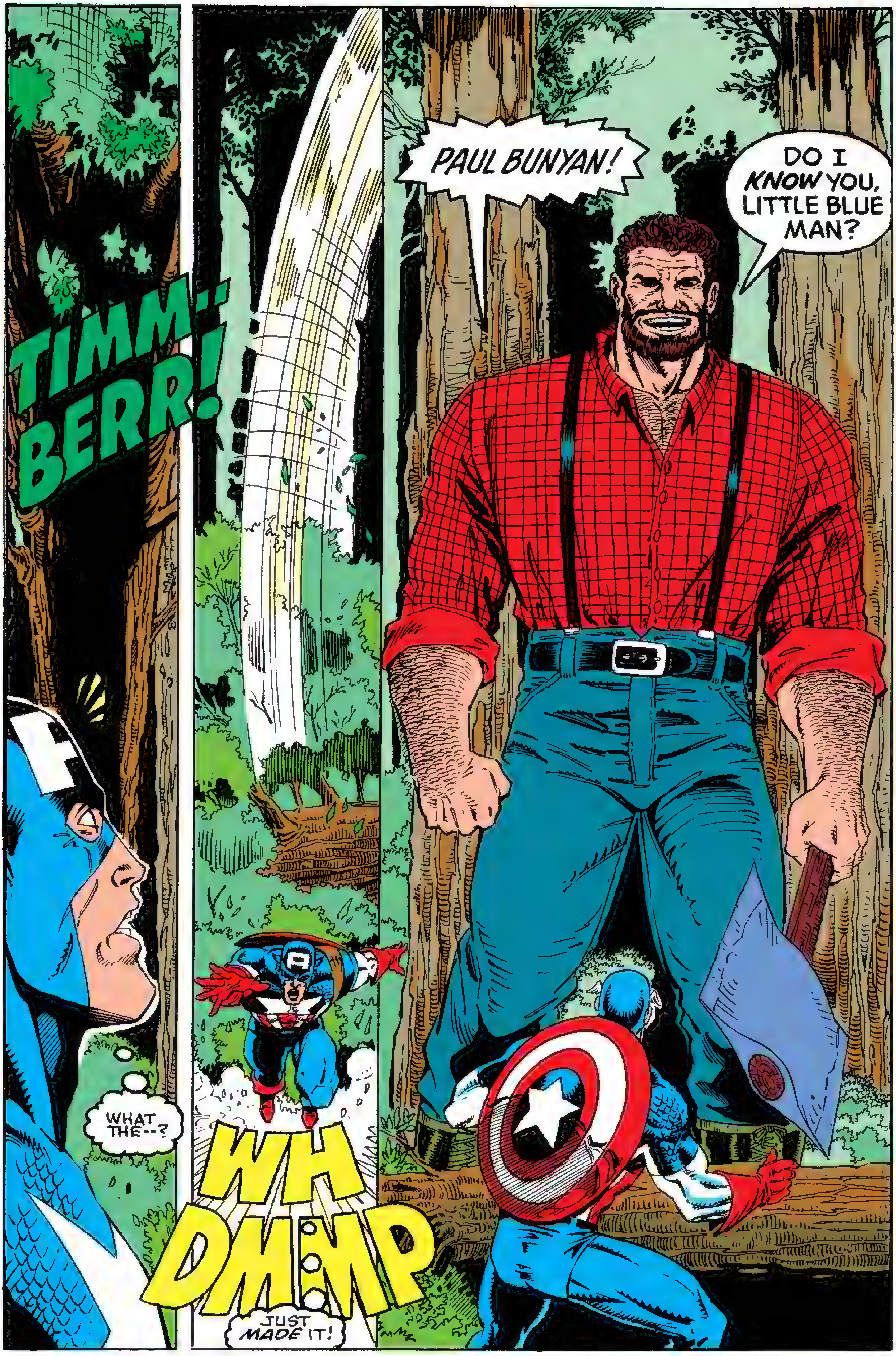

YOU SHORE AIN'T THE LAW IN THESE PARTS, CAP'N! THERE AIN'T NO LAW HERE-- 'CEPT FOR THE LAWS OF NATURE!
YOU MAY BE RIGHT. AND WHO ARE YOU?
SHOOT. YOU DON'T KNOW? I'M ONLY THE ROUGHEST, TOUGHEST, ORNERIEST, CUSSINGEST COWPOKE WHUT EVER SAT IN A SADDLE!
NAME'S PECOS BILL, MUH FRIEND. PUT 'ER THERE.
I HAVE HEARD OF YOU, BILL. FOLKS TELL PRETTY TALL TALES ABOUT YOU.
THEY AIN'T SO TALL--EVERY LAST DURN ONE OF 'EM IS TRUE!
SO WHERE WAS YOU SO ALL FIRED HOT TO GET TO?
THAT MOUNTAIN RANGE OVER THERE.
YOU HEARD OF THE OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAINTOP? I THINK HE'S THE GUY WHO CAN GET ME BACK HOME.
WAHHL, I'M HEADIN' IN THAT GEN'RAL DIRECTION IF YORE OF A MIND FER A LITTLE RIDE.
ALL RIGHT.
EASY NOW, WIDDER-MAKER. THIS CAP'N FELLER MAY DRESS FUNNY, BUT THAT'S NO REASON TA TOSS 'IM TA HIS DOOM!
SNXXXX
SO, BILL... YOU EVER SEE THE MAN ON THE MOUNTAINTOP?
HAIL, NO! MY PLACE IS OUT HERE ON THE RANGE!
YOU EVER RIDE LIKE THIS BEFORE?
CAN'T SAY I HAVE.
THEN YORE IN FOR A TREAT! HIYAA!

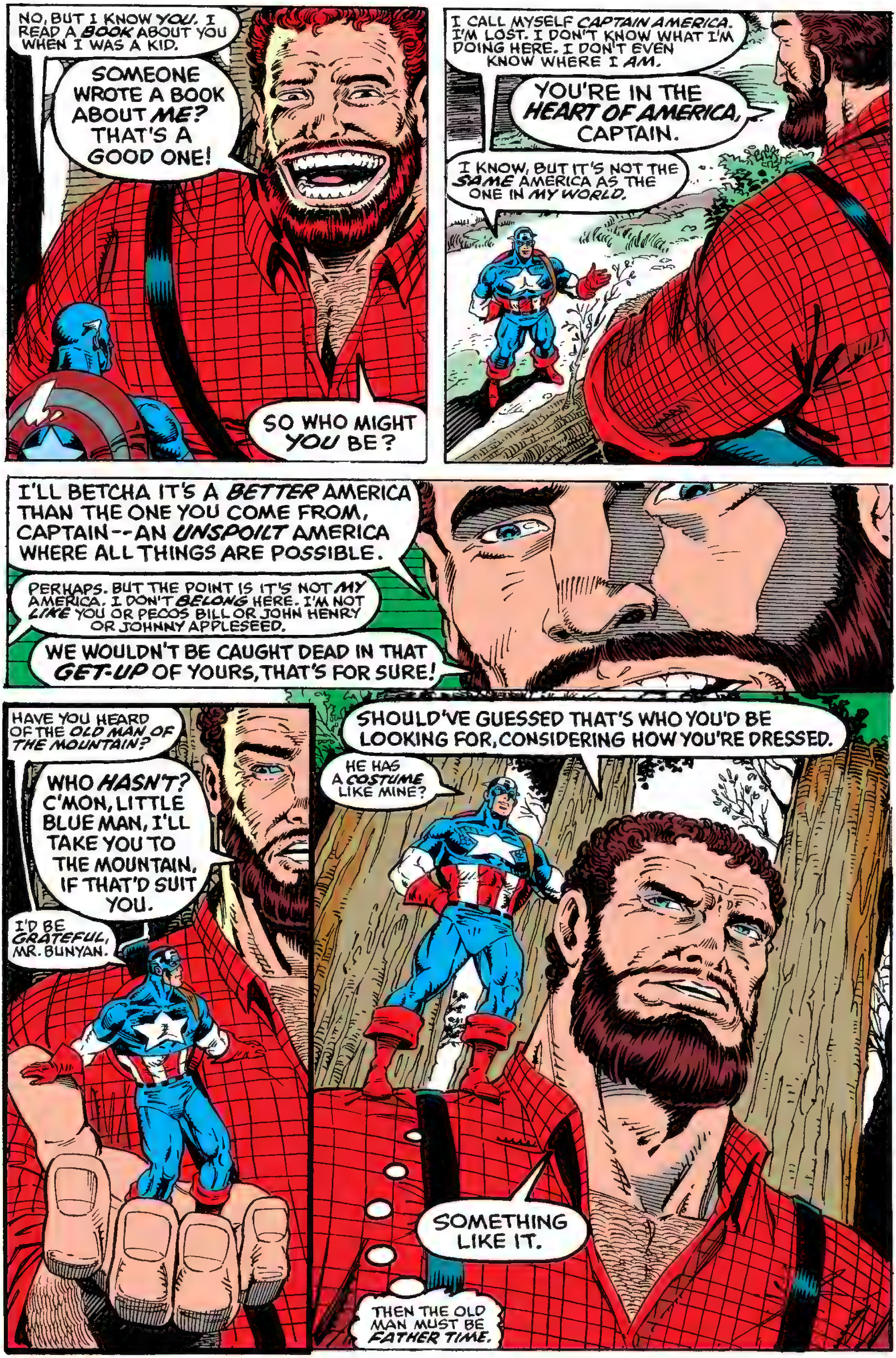

YEE-HAAAH! WILL YA LOOKIT THAT! AN HONEST-TA-GOODNESS CYCLONE'S GONE GOT ITSELF WHIPPED INTO A REAL LATHER!
THAT TWISTER--JUST SPRUNG UP OUT OF NOWHERE, JUST LIKE BILL'S CATTLE HERD DID!
BEEN A WHILE SINCE I LASSOED ME A TWISTER!
GIDDYAP, WIDDER-MAKER! GET ME TO THAT THERE FUNNEL 'FORE IT BEGINS TO DIE DOWN!
YOU MEAN TO RIDE THAT THING? ARE YOU CRAZY? NO MAN CAN TAME A TORNADO!
I AIN'T NO MAN, PODNER--
--I'M A COWBOY!
COUNT ME OUT!
YEEEHAAAAAA!
WHOOO!!!!!!

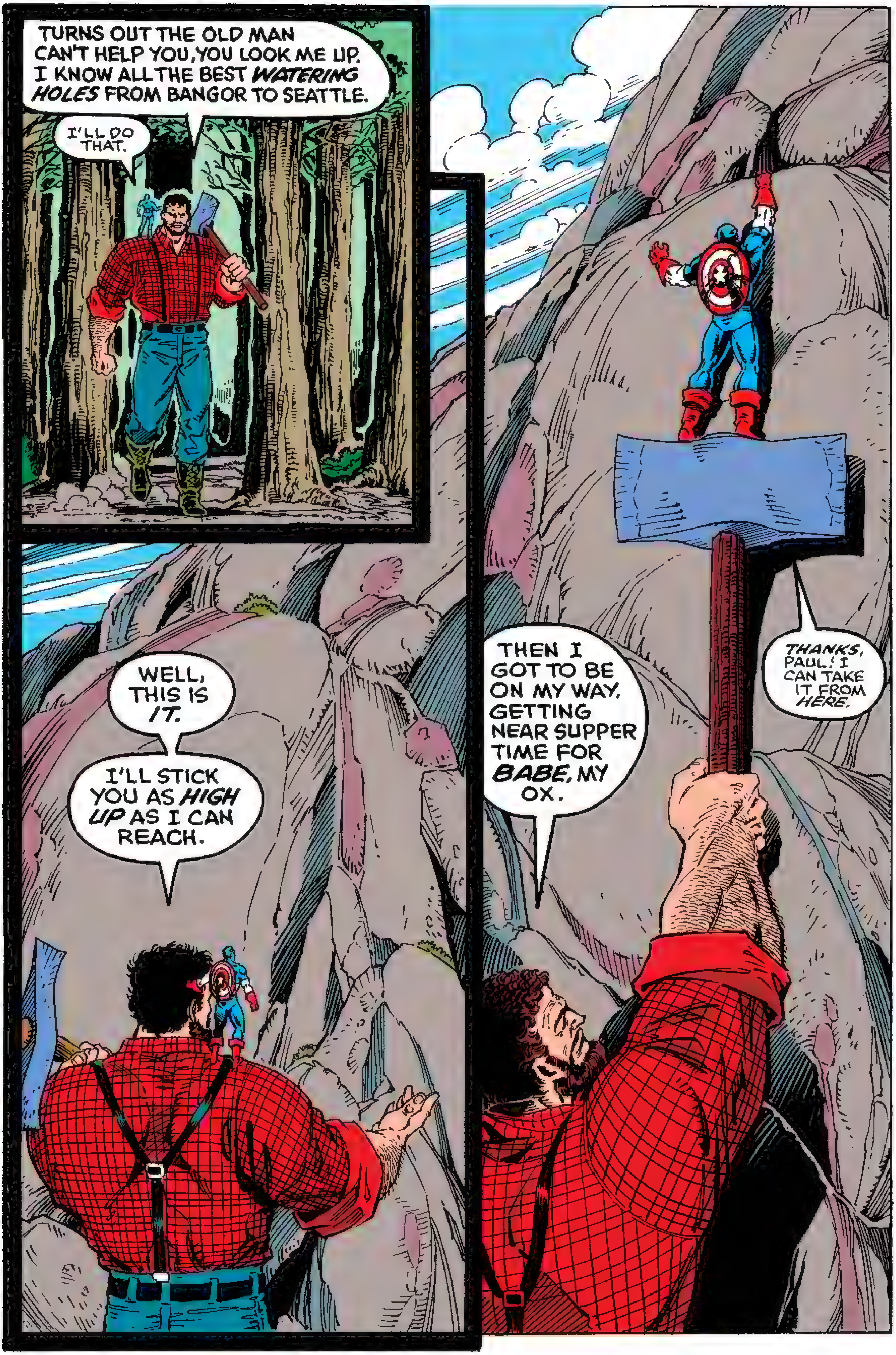

IT'S COMING STRAIGHT AT ME--TOO LATE TO OUTRUN IT!
WHOOOOIEIIIII
DIRT FLYING AT A 100 MPH--GOT TO COVER MY EYES!
BILL, YOU CRAZY OLD COOT--
WHOOOIIIIII
--HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING!
THE NOISE AND WIND HAVE STOPPED!
THE TORNADO MUST'VE--HUH?
RAILROAD TRACK.
I DIDN'T NOTICE THIS WHEN WE WERE GALLOPING UP.
MAY WELL NOT HAVE BEEN HERE.
KNNK
KNNK
SOUND COMING FROM UP AHEAD.
THESE MOUNTAINS... DON'T LOOK LIKE THE SAME MOUNTAINS I HAD BEEN HEADING TOWARD.
I GET THE FEELING I'M DEALING WITH SHAPESHIFTING LANDSCAPE HERE.
I'M IN SOME KIND OF FRONTIER FANTASYLAND POPULATED BY FIGURES FROM AMERICA'S MYTHIC PAST... BUT WHY? WHAT'S THE CONNECTION TO FATHER TIME?
KNNK KNNK
AND HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO--
KNNK
A MAN POUNDING IN RAILROAD TIES.
KNNK
I THINK I KNOW WHO HE IS.

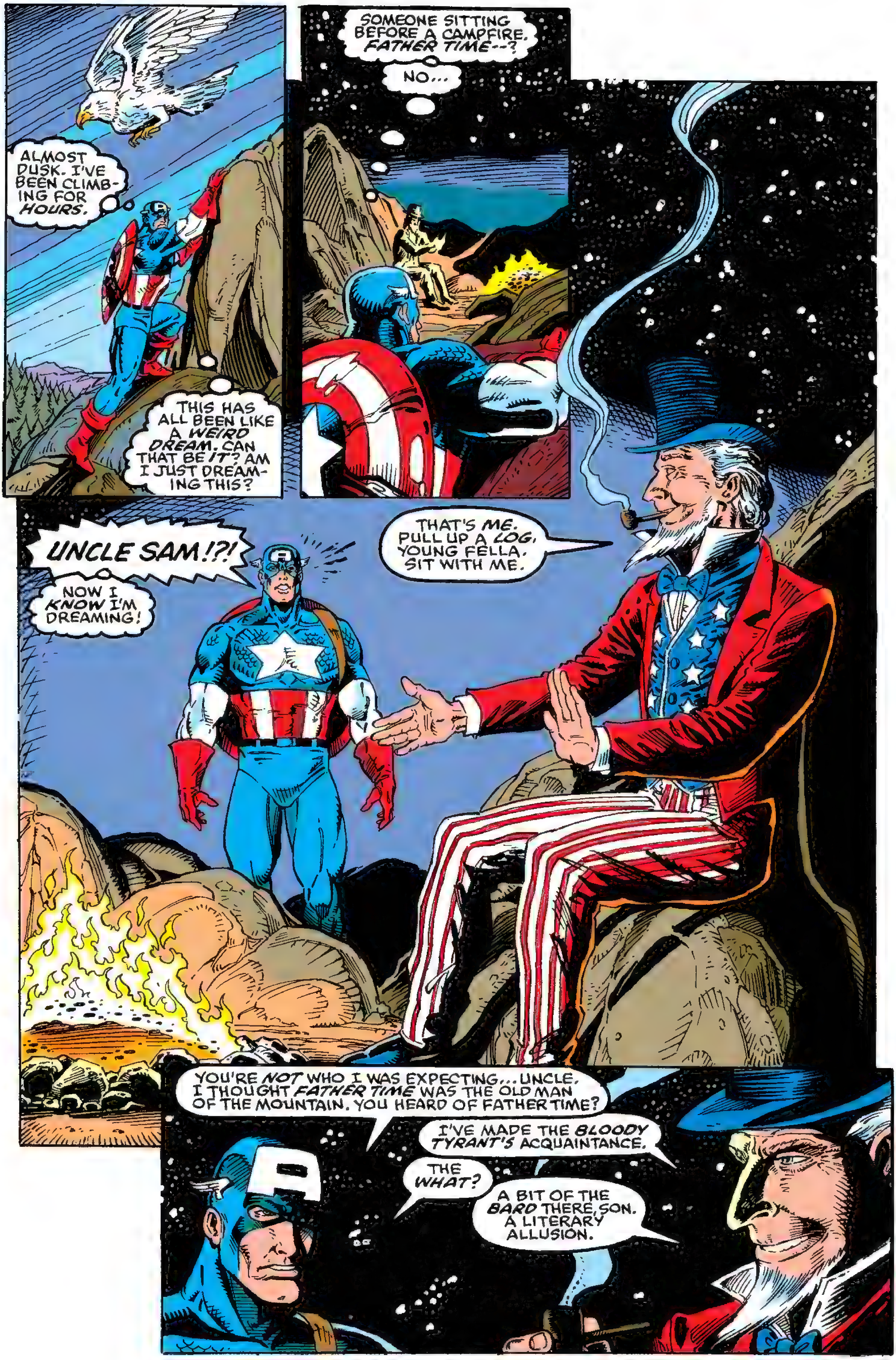
♪ OH, MY HAMMER... HAMMER RING... WHILE I SWING, LAWD... HERE I SING! ♪
KNNK
YOU'RE *JOHN HENRY,* AREN'T YOU?
THAT'S WHAT MY MAMMY NAMED ME.
MY NAME'S CAPTAIN AMERICA.
I'M LOOKING FOR A *MAN*-- HE'S GOT A BEARD, A CAPE, AND A SCYTHE. YOU *SEEN* HIM?
NO, SUH.
NOT EXACTLY THE *TALKATIVE* SORT.
KNNK

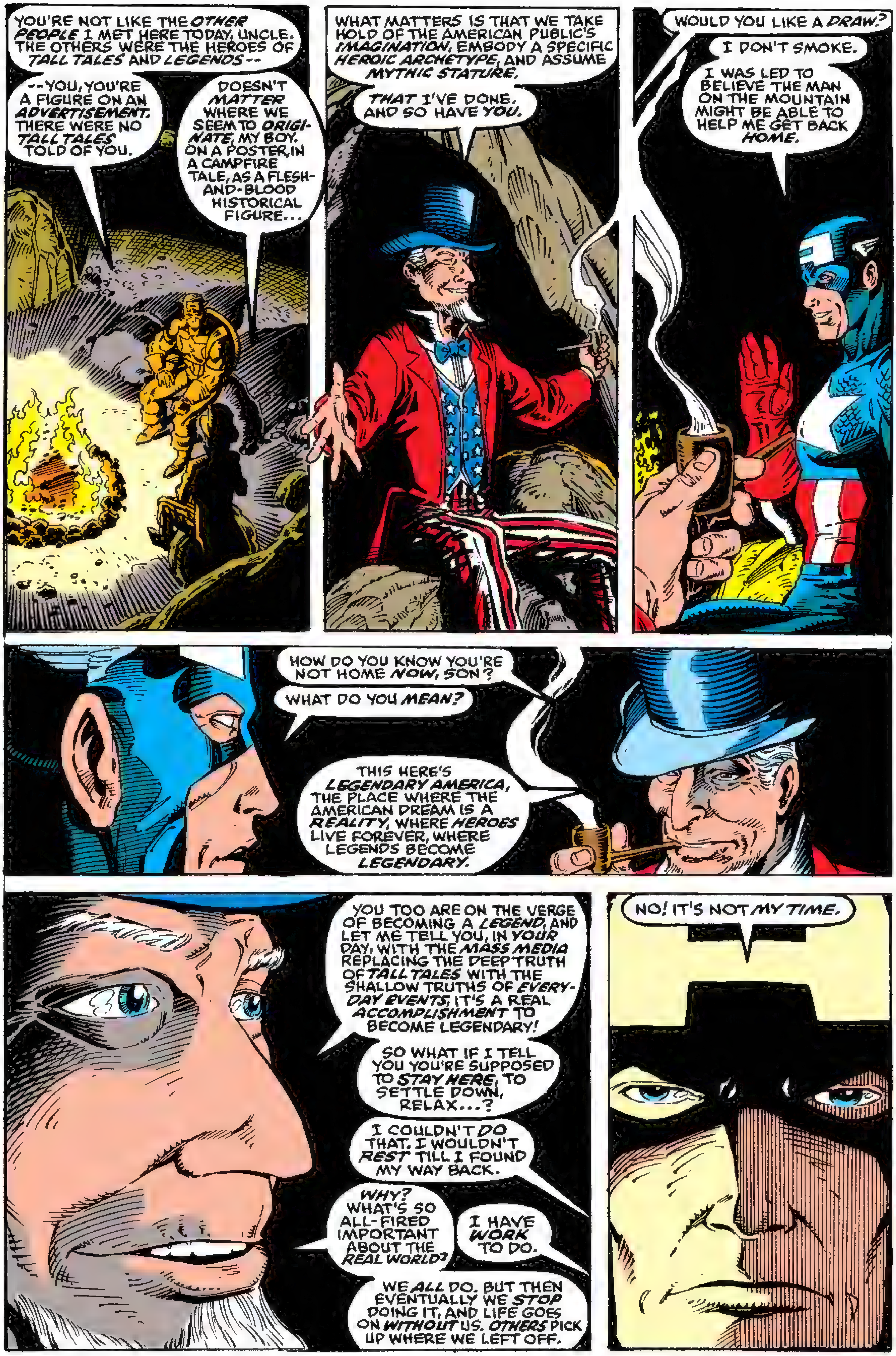

WELL, I'LL LEAVE YOU TO YOUR BUSINESS THEN, MR. HENRY.
SAY, I NEVER UNDERSTOOD WHY YOU WERE SO DRIVEN TO *DRIVE STEEL.*
MAN'S GOTTA DO WHAT HE'S *GOOD* AT.
CAN'T ARGUE WITH THAT.
GOODBYE, MR. HENRY.
MOSES WENT TO THE MOUNTAINTOP, TOO.
KNNK
WHAT? HOW DID *YOU* KNOW WHERE I WAS GOING?
YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'S A MAN WHO'LL CLIMB TO THE *TOP O' CREATION* TO FIND OUT WHAT HE'S GOTTA FIND OUT.
MOSES WENT TO THE MOUNTAINTOP TO TALK WITH *GOD.* IS... *GOD* AT THE TOP OF THESE MOUNTAINS?
NO, SUH. THE LAWD IS *EVERYWHERE.*
SO LONG, MR. HENRY.
WHAT--? I LOOK BACK FOR BUT A MOMENT AND WHEN I TURN AROUND AGAIN I'M SUDDENLY SURROUNDED BY *TREES.*
NOT JOHNNY APPLESEED'S ORCHARD EITHER-- AN *OLD GROWTH FOREST!*
DOES SOMEONE CONTROL THE GEOGRAPHY HERE? IS SOMEONE TRYING TO *KEEP ME* FROM REACHING THE *MOUNTAIN?*

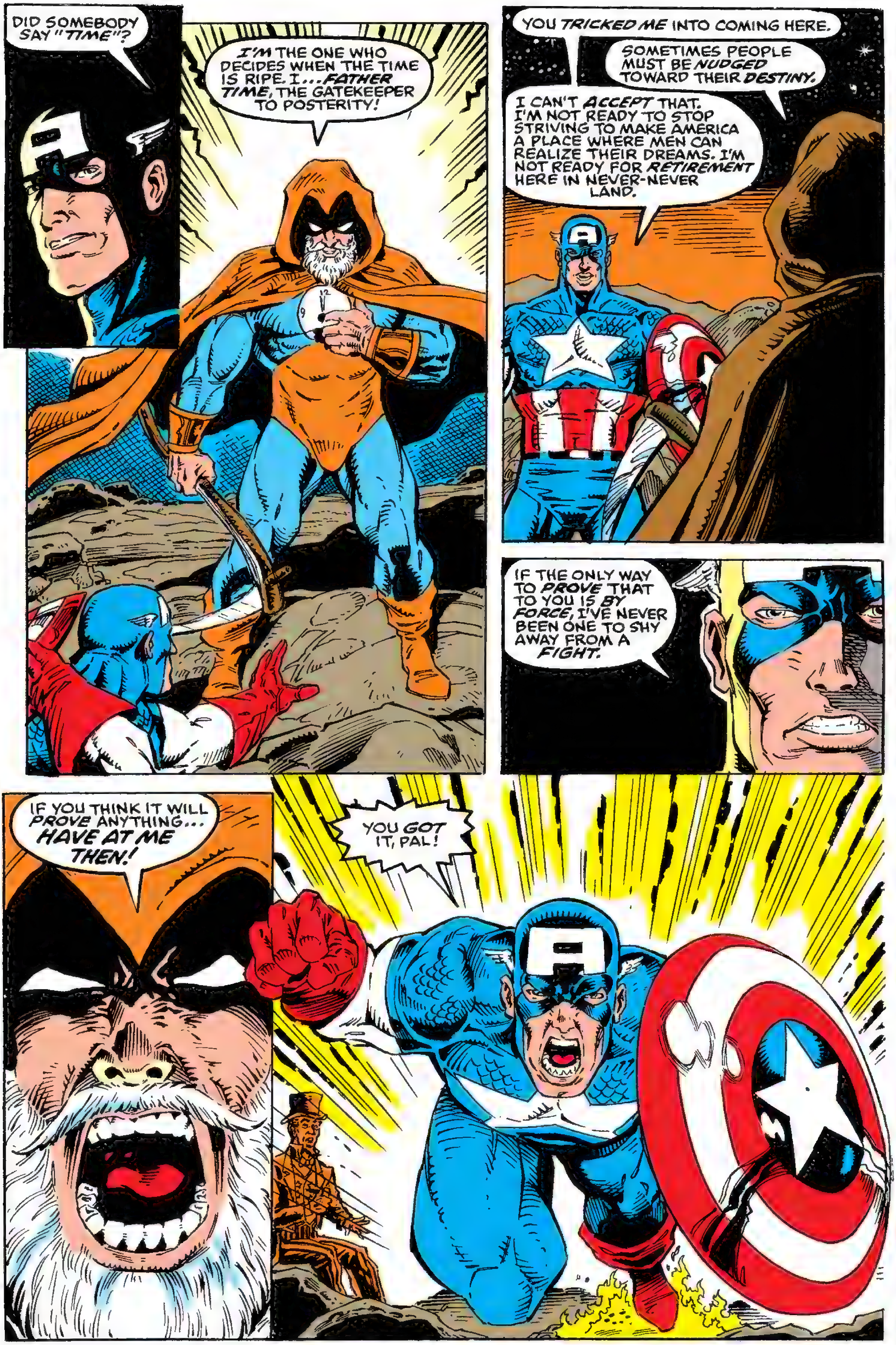

TIMM... BERR!
WHAT THE--?
WHUMP
JUST MADE IT!
PAUL BUNYAN!
DO I KNOW YOU, LITTLE BLUE MAN?

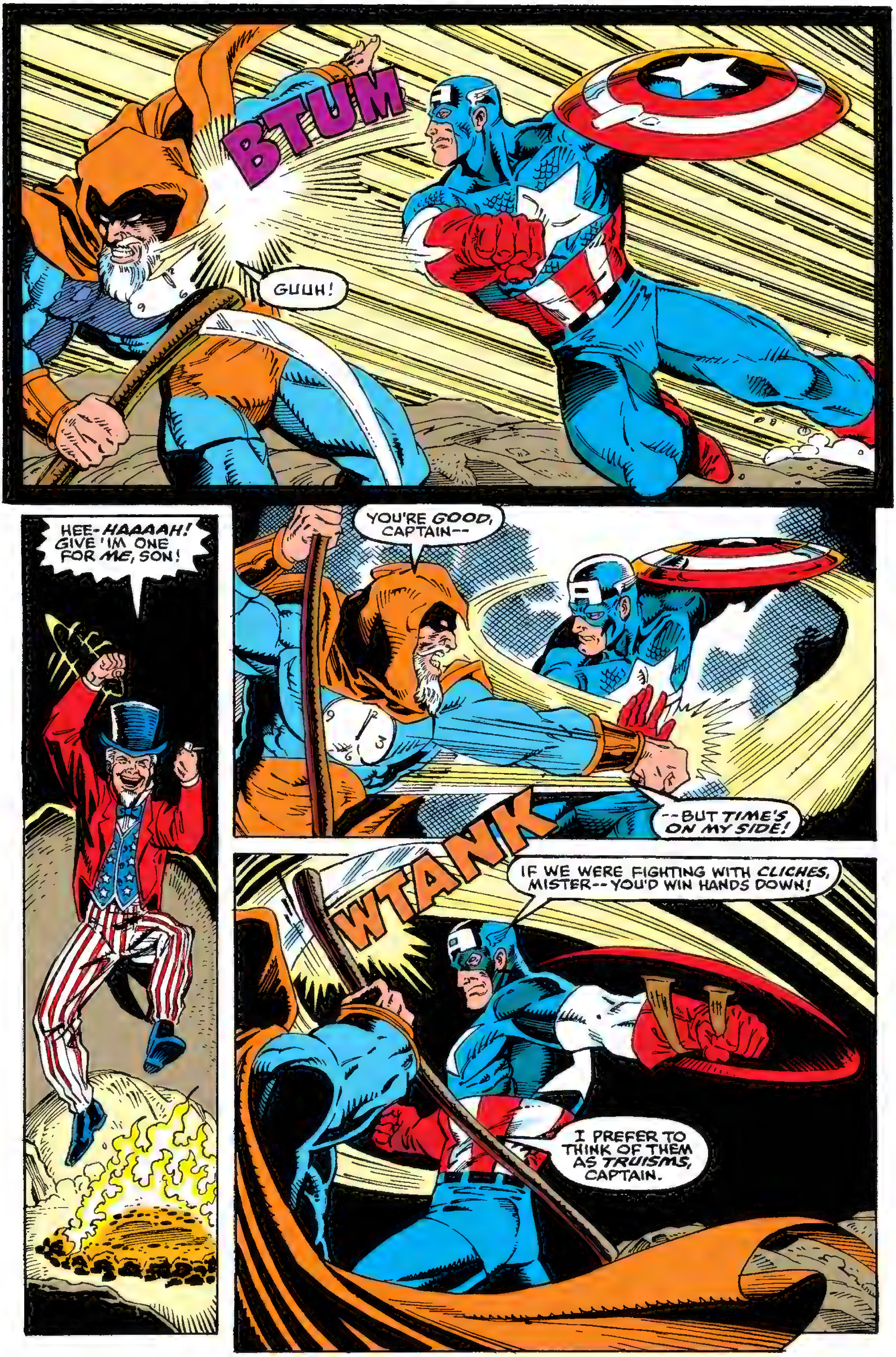

NO, BUT I KNOW *YOU*. I READ A *BOOK* ABOUT YOU WHEN I WAS A KID.
SOMEONE WROTE A BOOK ABOUT *ME?* THAT'S A GOOD ONE!
SO WHO MIGHT *YOU* BE?
I CALL MYSELF *CAPTAIN AMERICA*. I'M LOST. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M DOING HERE. I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE I *AM*.
YOU'RE IN THE *HEART OF AMERICA*, CAPTAIN.
I KNOW, BUT IT'S NOT THE *SAME* AMERICA AS THE ONE IN *MY WORLD*.
I'LL BETCHA IT'S A *BETTER* AMERICA THAN THE ONE YOU COME FROM, CAPTAIN--AN *UNSPOILT* AMERICA WHERE ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.
PERHAPS. BUT THE POINT IS IT'S NOT *MY* AMERICA. I DON'T *BELONG* HERE. I'M NOT *LIKE* YOU OR PECOS BILL OR JOHN HENRY OR JOHNNY APPLESEED.
WE WOULDN'T BE CAUGHT DEAD IN THAT *GET-UP* OF YOURS, THAT'S FOR SURE!
HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE *OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN?*
WHO *HASN'T?* C'MON, LITTLE BLUE MAN, I'LL TAKE YOU TO THE MOUNTAIN, IF THAT'D SUIT YOU.
I'D BE *GRATEFUL*, MR. BUNYAN.
SHOULD'VE GUESSED THAT'S WHO YOU'D BE LOOKING FOR, CONSIDERING HOW YOU'RE DRESSED.
HE HAS A *COSTUME* LIKE MINE?
SOMETHING LIKE IT.
THEN THE OLD MAN MUST BE *FATHER TIME*.

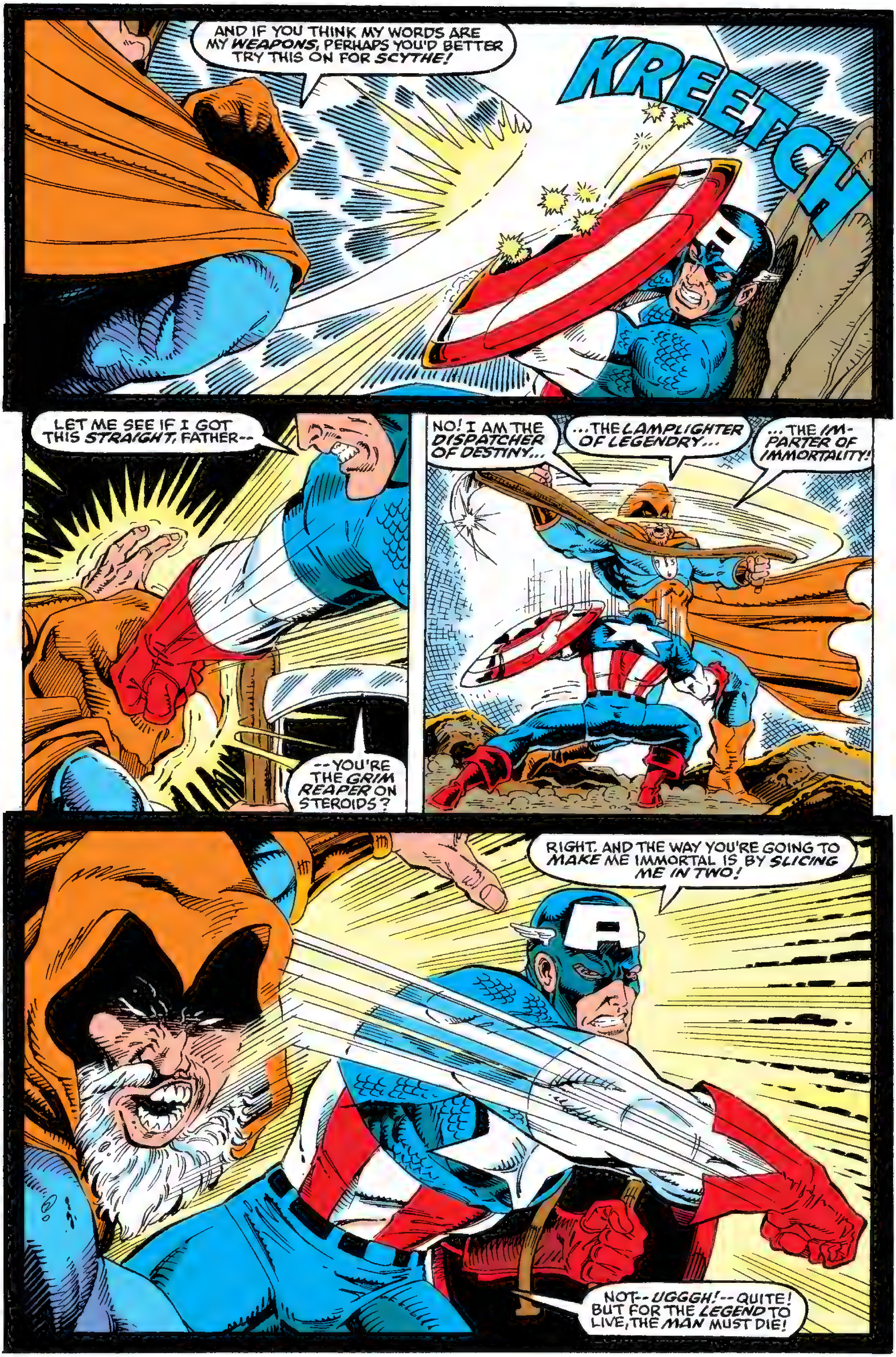

TURNS OUT THE OLD MAN CAN'T HELP YOU, YOU LOOK ME UP. I KNOW ALL THE BEST *WATERING HOLES* FROM BANGOR TO SEATTLE.
I'LL DO THAT.
WELL, THIS IS *IT.*
I'LL STICK YOU AS *HIGH UP* AS I CAN REACH.
THEN I GOT TO BE ON MY WAY. GETTING NEAR SUPPER TIME FOR *BABE,* MY OX.
THANKS, PAUL! I CAN TAKE IT FROM *HERE.*

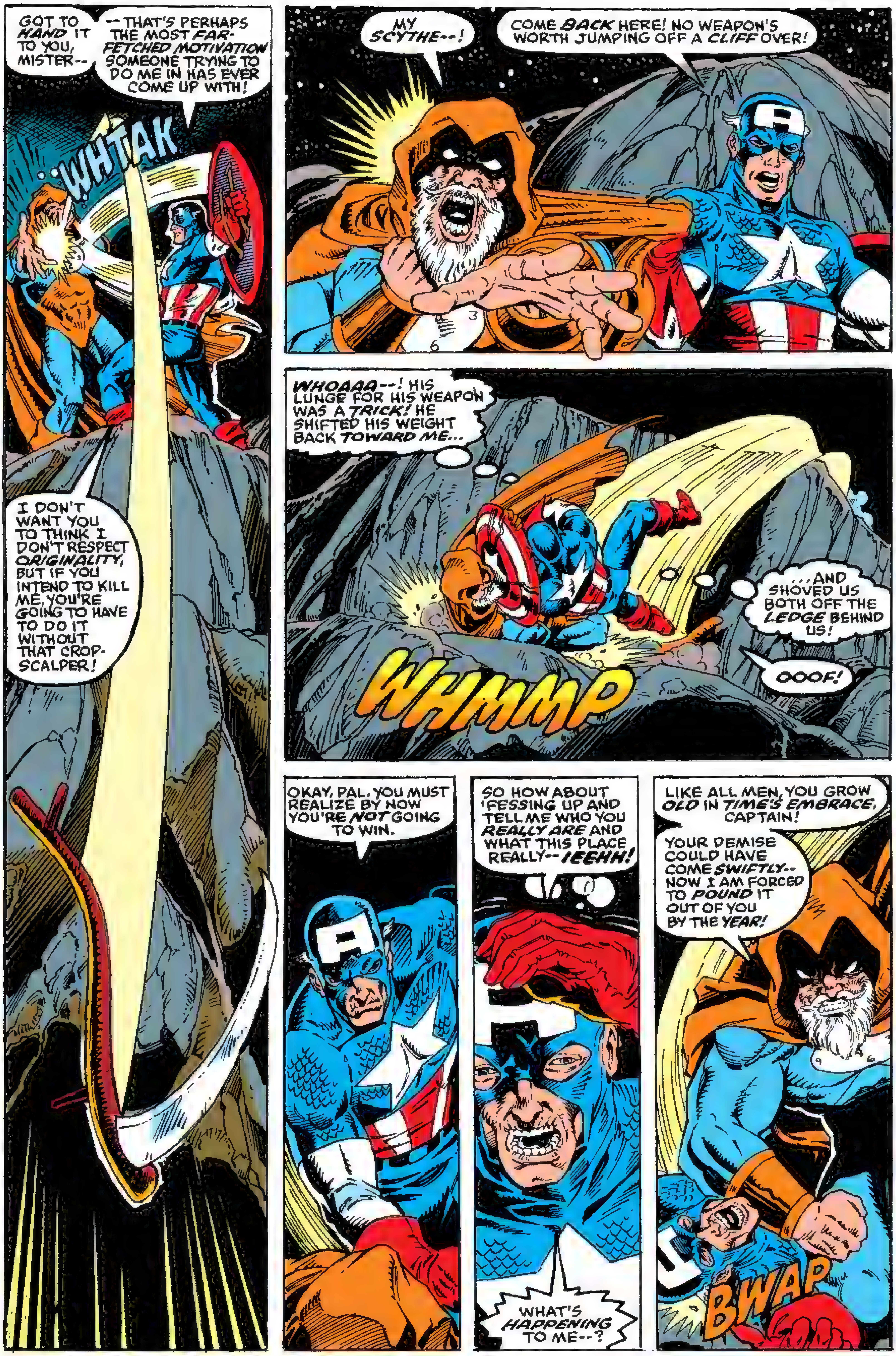

ALMOST DUSK. I'VE BEEN CLIMBING FOR *HOURS*.
THIS HAS ALL BEEN LIKE A *WEIRD DREAM*. CAN THAT BE *IT*? AM I JUST DREAMING THIS?
SOMEONE SITTING BEFORE A CAMPFIRE. *FATHER TIME*--?
NO...
UNCLE SAM!?!
NOW I *KNOW* I'M DREAMING!
THAT'S *ME*. PULL UP A *LOG*, YOUNG FELLA. SIT WITH ME.
YOU'RE *NOT* WHO I WAS EXPECTING... UNCLE. I THOUGHT *FATHER TIME* WAS THE OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN. YOU HEARD OF FATHER TIME?
I'VE MADE THE *BLOODY TYRANT'S* ACQUAINTANCE.
THE *WHAT*?
A BIT OF THE *BARD* THERE, SON. A LITERARY ALLUSION.

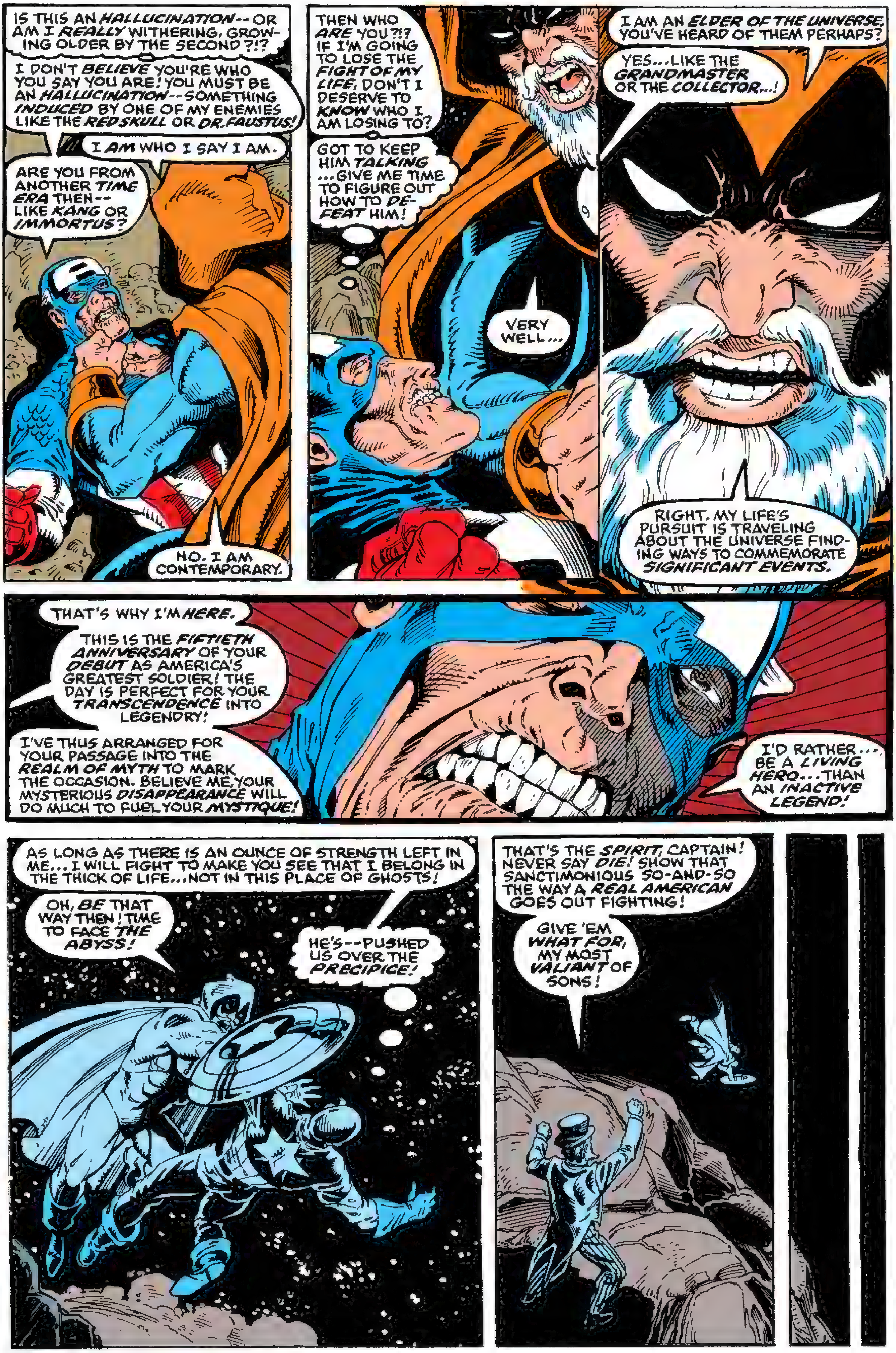

YOU'RE NOT LIKE THE *OTHER PEOPLE* I MET HERE TODAY, UNCLE. THE OTHERS WERE THE HEROES OF *TALL TALES* AND *LEGENDS*--
--YOU, YOU'RE A FIGURE ON AN *ADVERTISEMENT.* THERE WERE NO *TALL TALES* TOLD OF YOU.
DOESN'T *MATTER* WHERE WE SEEM TO *ORIGINATE,* MY BOY. ON A POSTER, IN A CAMPFIRE TALE, AS A FLESH-AND-BLOOD HISTORICAL FIGURE...
WHAT MATTERS IS THAT WE TAKE HOLD OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC'S *IMAGINATION,* EMBODY A SPECIFIC *HEROIC ARCHETYPE,* AND ASSUME *MYTHIC STATURE.*
THAT I'VE DONE. AND SO HAVE *YOU.*
WOULD YOU LIKE A *DRAW?*
I DON'T SMOKE.
I WAS LED TO BELIEVE THE MAN ON THE MOUNTAIN MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP ME GET BACK *HOME.*
HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU'RE NOT HOME *NOW,* SON?
WHAT DO YOU *MEAN?*
THIS HERE'S *LEGENDARY AMERICA,* THE PLACE WHERE THE AMERICAN DREAM IS A *REALITY,* WHERE *HEROES* LIVE FOREVER, WHERE LEGENDS BECOME *LEGENDARY.*
YOU TOO ARE ON THE VERGE OF BECOMING A *LEGEND,* AND LET ME TELL YOU, IN *YOUR* DAY, WITH THE *MASS MEDIA* REPLACING THE DEEP TRUTH OF *TALL TALES* WITH THE SHALLOW TRUTHS OF *EVERYDAY EVENTS,* IT'S A REAL *ACCOMPLISHMENT* TO BECOME LEGENDARY!
SO WHAT IF I TELL YOU YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO *STAY HERE,* TO SETTLE DOWN, RELAX...?
I COULDN'T *DO* THAT. I WOULDN'T *REST* TILL I FOUND MY WAY BACK.
WHY? WHAT'S SO ALL-FIRED IMPORTANT ABOUT THE *REAL WORLD?*
I HAVE *WORK* TO DO.
WE *ALL* DO. BUT THEN EVENTUALLY WE *STOP* DOING IT, AND LIFE GOES ON *WITHOUT* US. *OTHERS* PICK UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF.
NO! IT'S NOT *MY TIME.*


DID SOMEBODY SAY "*TIME*"?
I'M THE ONE WHO DECIDES WHEN THE TIME IS RIPE. I... *FATHER TIME*, THE GATEKEEPER TO POSTERITY!
YOU *TRICKED ME* INTO COMING HERE.
SOMETIMES PEOPLE MUST BE *NUDGED* TOWARD THEIR *DESTINY*.
I CAN'T *ACCEPT* THAT. I'M NOT READY TO STOP STRIVING TO MAKE AMERICA A PLACE WHERE MEN CAN REALIZE THEIR DREAMS. I'M NOT READY FOR *RETIREMENT* HERE IN NEVER-NEVER LAND.
IF THE ONLY WAY TO *PROVE* THAT TO YOU IS *BY FORCE*, I'VE NEVER BEEN ONE TO SHY AWAY FROM A *FIGHT*.
IF YOU THINK IT WILL *PROVE* ANYTHING... *HAVE AT ME THEN!*
YOU *GOT* IT, PAL!


BTUM
GUUH!
HEE-*HAAAAH!* GIVE 'IM ONE FOR *ME*, SON!
YOU'RE *GOOD*, CAPTAIN--
--BUT *TIME'S* ON MY *SIDE!*
WTANK
IF WE WERE FIGHTING WITH *CLICHES*, MISTER--YOU'D WIN HANDS DOWN!
I PREFER TO THINK OF THEM AS *TRUISMS*, CAPTAIN.


AND IF YOU THINK MY WORDS ARE MY *WEAPONS*, PERHAPS YOU'D BETTER TRY THIS ON FOR *SCYTHE!*
KREETCH
LET ME SEE IF I GOT THIS *STRAIGHT*, FATHER--
--YOU'RE THE *GRIM REAPER* ON STEROIDS?
NO! I AM THE *DISPATCHER OF DESTINY...*
...THE *LAMPLIGHTER OF LEGENDRY...*
...THE *IMPARTER OF IMMORTALITY!*
RIGHT. AND THE WAY YOU'RE GOING TO *MAKE* ME IMMORTAL IS BY *SLICING ME IN TWO!*
NOT-- *UGGGH!* --QUITE! BUT FOR THE *LEGEND* TO LIVE, THE *MAN* MUST DIE!


GOT TO HAND IT TO YOU, MISTER--
--THAT'S PERHAPS THE MOST FAR-FETCHED MOTIVATION SOMEONE TRYING TO DO ME IN HAS EVER COME UP WITH!
WHTAK
I DON'T WANT YOU TO THINK I DON'T RESPECT ORIGINALITY, BUT IF YOU INTEND TO KILL ME, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO DO IT WITHOUT THAT CROP-SCALPER!
MY SCYTHE--!
COME BACK HERE! NO WEAPON'S WORTH JUMPING OFF A CLIFF OVER!
WHOAAA--! HIS LUNGE FOR HIS WEAPON WAS A TRICK! HE SHIFTED HIS WEIGHT BACK TOWARD ME...
...AND SHOVED US BOTH OFF THE LEDGE BEHIND US!
WHMMP
OOOF!
OKAY, PAL. YOU MUST REALIZE BY NOW YOU'RE NOT GOING TO WIN.
SO HOW ABOUT 'FESSING UP AND TELL ME WHO YOU REALLY ARE AND WHAT THIS PLACE REALLY--IEEHH!
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME--?
LIKE ALL MEN, YOU GROW OLD IN TIME'S EMBRACE, CAPTAIN!
YOUR DEMISE COULD HAVE COME SWIFTLY--NOW I AM FORCED TO POUND IT OUT OF YOU BY THE YEAR!
BWAP


IS THIS AN HALLUCINATION-- OR AM I REALLY WITHERING, GROWING OLDER BY THE SECOND?!?
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU'RE WHO YOU SAY YOU ARE! YOU MUST BE AN HALLUCINATION--SOMETHING INDUCED BY ONE OF MY ENEMIES LIKE THE RED SKULL OR DR. FAUSTUS!
I AM WHO I SAY I AM.
ARE YOU FROM ANOTHER TIME ERA THEN-- LIKE KANG OR IMMORTUS?
NO. I AM CONTEMPORARY.
THEN WHO ARE YOU?!? IF I'M GOING TO LOSE THE FIGHT OF MY LIFE, DON'T I DESERVE TO KNOW WHO I AM LOSING TO?
GOT TO KEEP HIM TALKING ...GIVE ME TIME TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO DEFEAT HIM!
VERY WELL...
I AM AN ELDER OF THE UNIVERSE. YOU'VE HEARD OF THEM PERHAPS?
YES...LIKE THE GRANDMASTER OR THE COLLECTOR...!
RIGHT. MY LIFE'S PURSUIT IS TRAVELING ABOUT THE UNIVERSE FINDING WAYS TO COMMEMORATE SIGNIFICANT EVENTS.
THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.
THIS IS THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF YOUR DEBUT AS AMERICA'S GREATEST SOLDIER! THE DAY IS PERFECT FOR YOUR TRANSCENDENCE INTO LEGENDRY!
I'VE THUS ARRANGED FOR YOUR PASSAGE INTO THE REALM OF MYTH TO MARK THE OCCASION. BELIEVE ME, YOUR MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE WILL DO MUCH TO FUEL YOUR MYSTIQUE!
I'D RATHER... BE A LIVING HERO...THAN AN INACTIVE LEGEND!
AS LONG AS THERE IS AN OUNCE OF STRENGTH LEFT IN ME... I WILL FIGHT TO MAKE YOU SEE THAT I BELONG IN THE THICK OF LIFE...NOT IN THIS PLACE OF GHOSTS!
OH, BE THAT WAY THEN! TIME TO FACE THE ABYSS!
HE'S--PUSHED US OVER THE PRECIPICE!
THAT'S THE SPIRIT, CAPTAIN! NEVER SAY DIE! SHOW THAT SANCTIMONIOUS SO-AND-SO THE WAY A REAL AMERICAN GOES OUT FIGHTING!
GIVE 'EM WHAT FOR, MY MOST VALIANT OF SONS!

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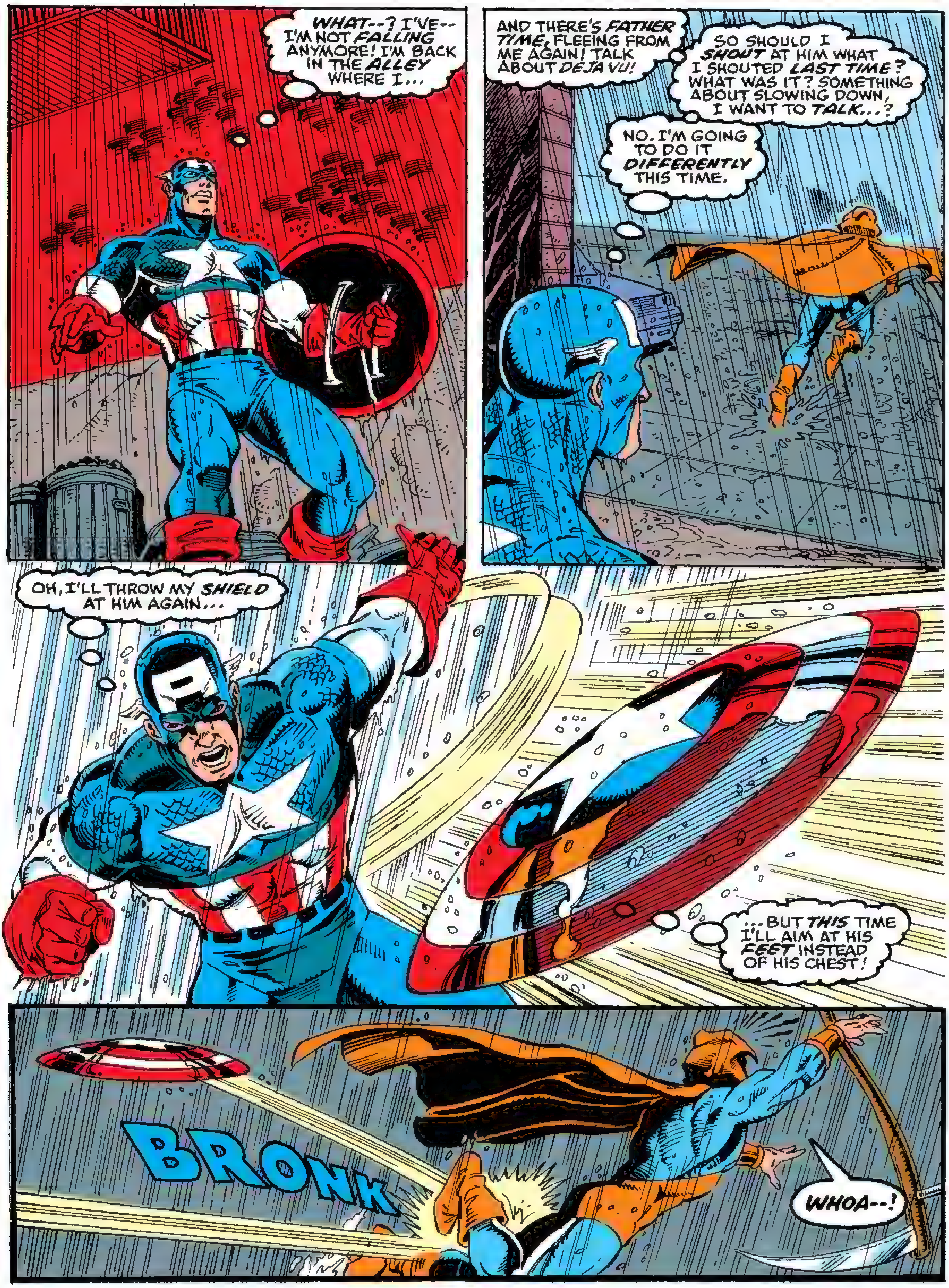
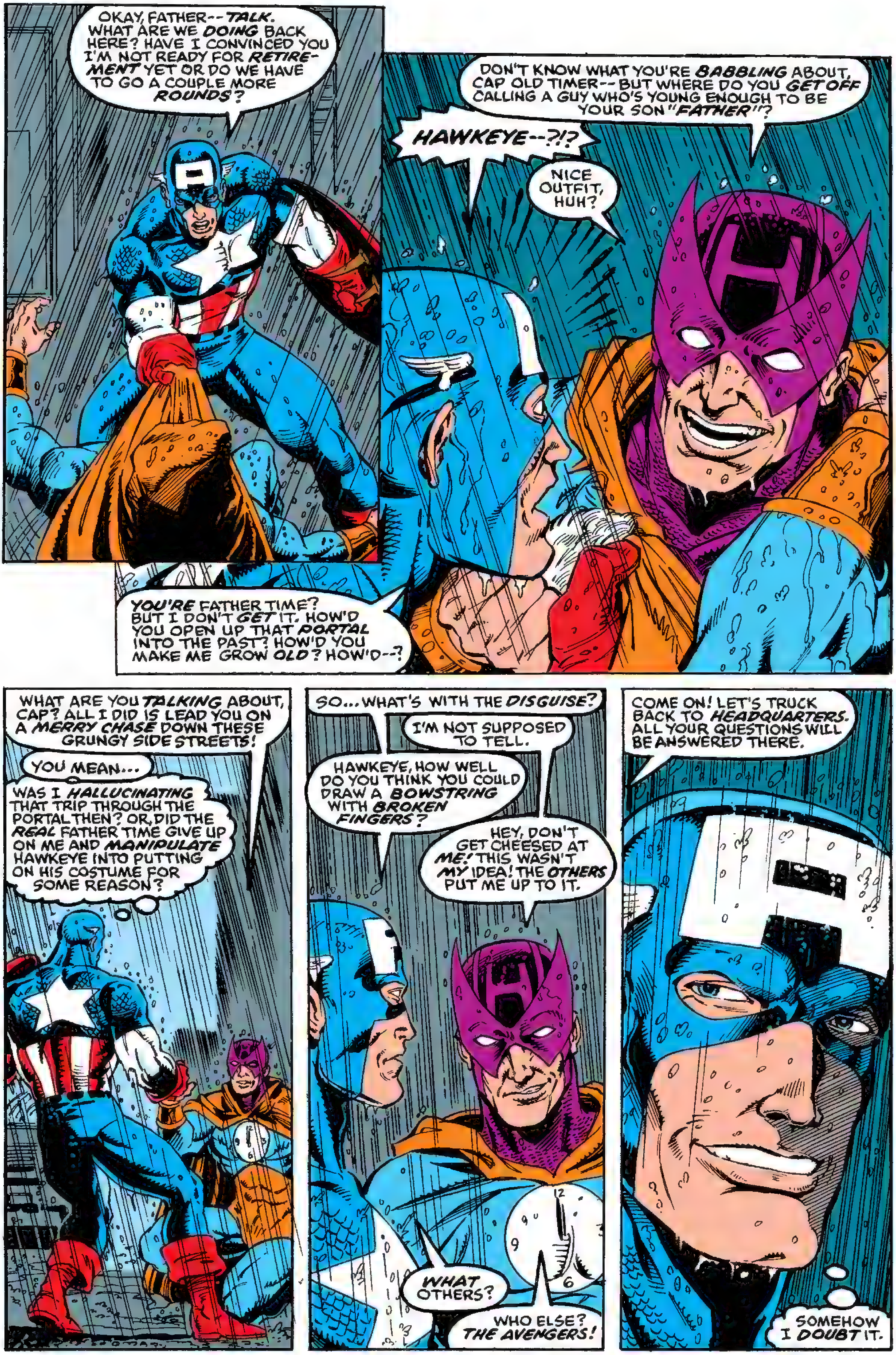
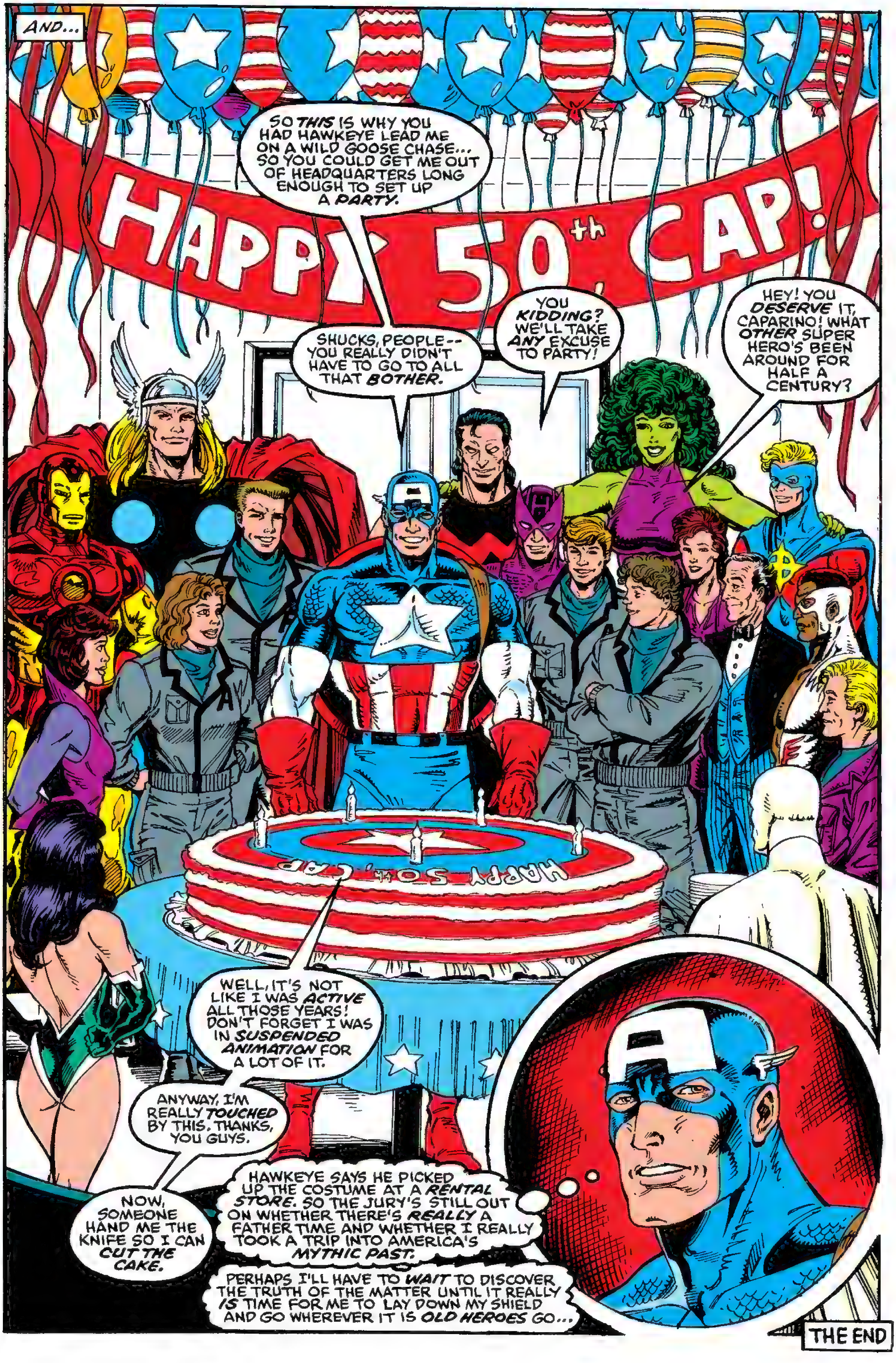
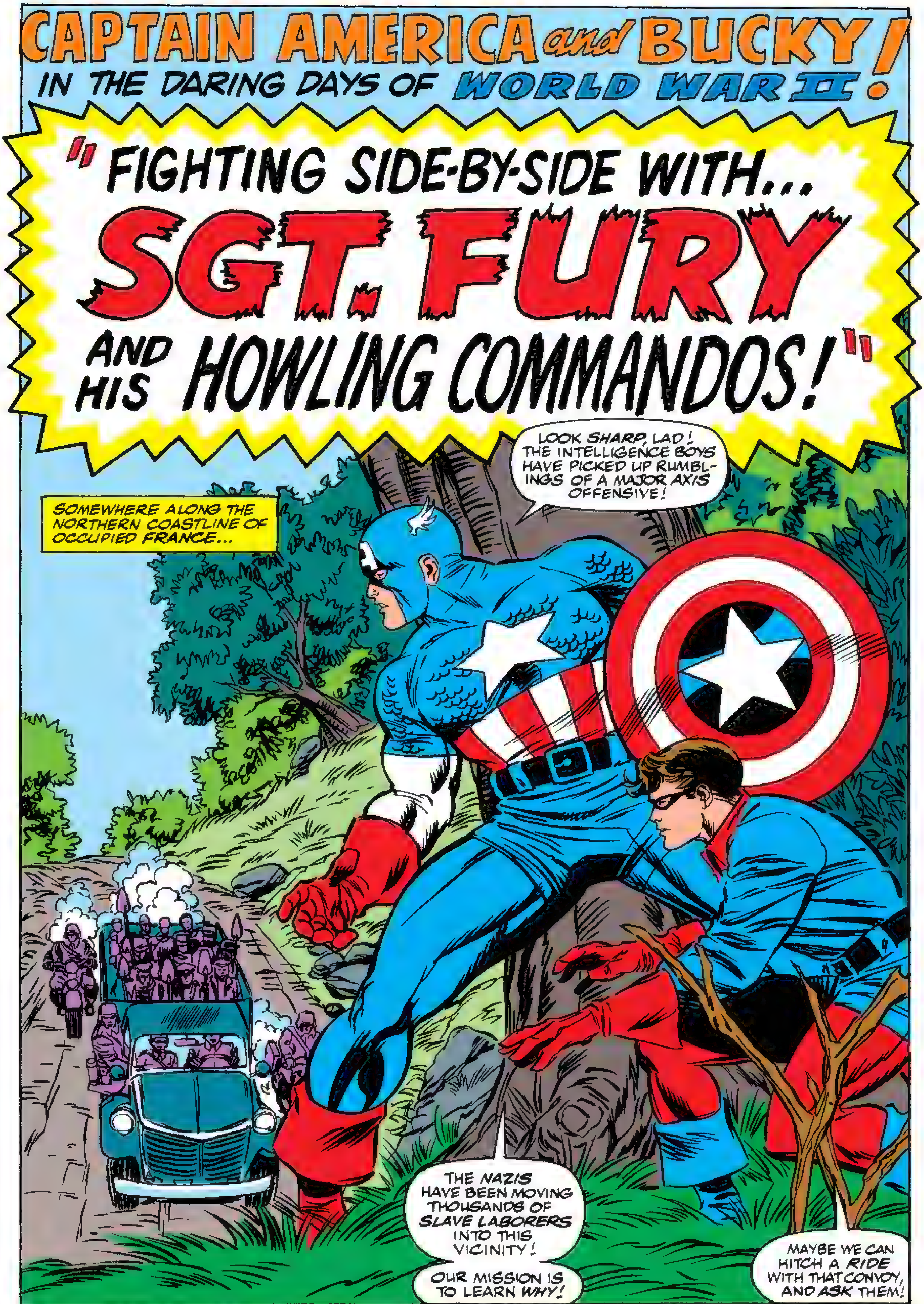
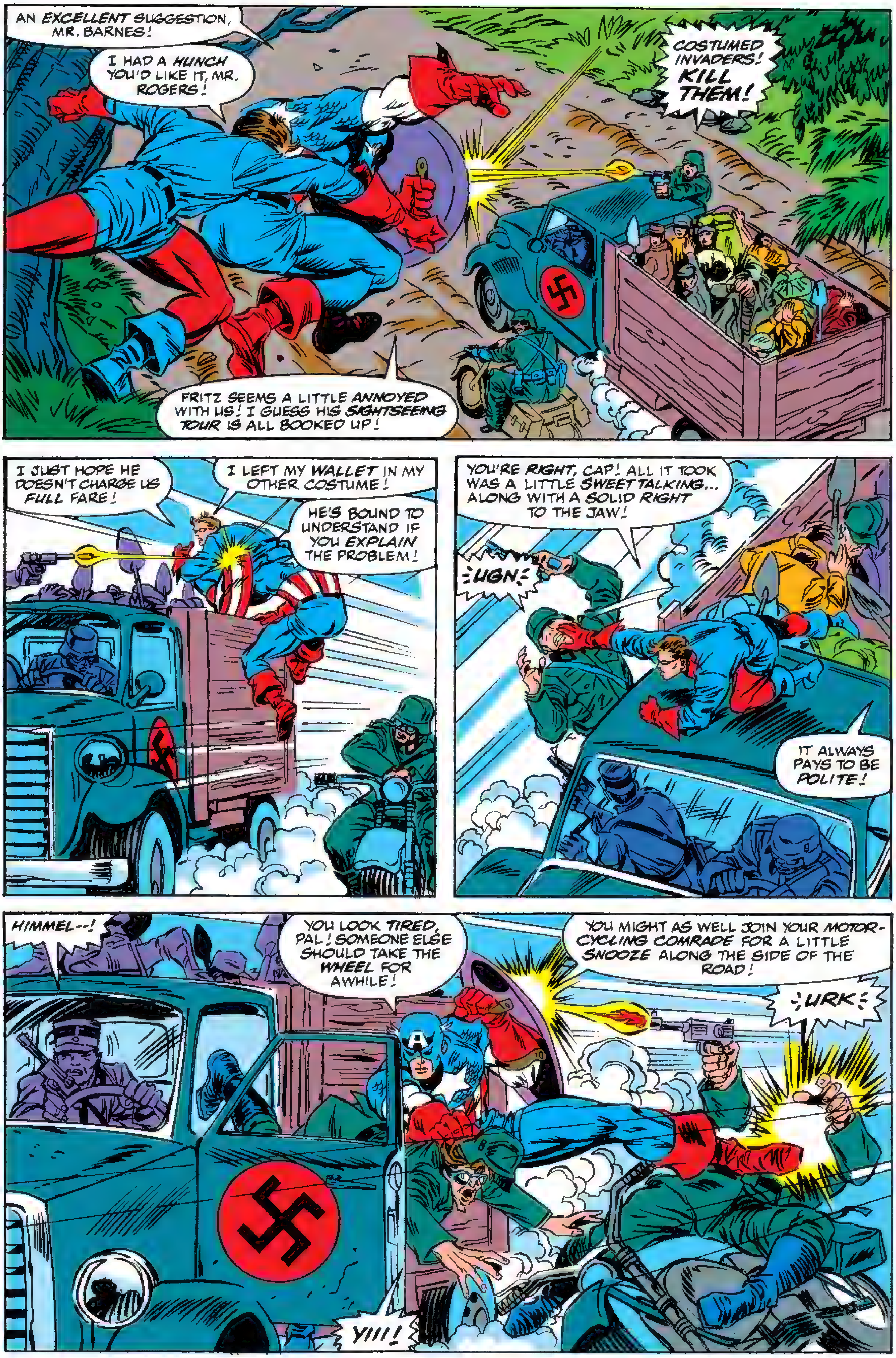

WHAT--? I'VE-- I'M NOT *FALLING* ANYMORE! I'M BACK IN THE *ALLEY* WHERE I...
AND THERE'S *FATHER TIME,* FLEEING FROM ME AGAIN! TALK ABOUT *DEJA VU!*
SO SHOULD I *SHOUT* AT HIM WHAT I SHOUTED *LAST TIME?* WHAT WAS IT? SOMETHING ABOUT SLOWING DOWN, I WANT TO *TALK...?*
NO. I'M GOING TO DO IT *DIFFERENTLY* THIS TIME.
OH, I'LL THROW MY *SHIELD* AT HIM AGAIN...
...BUT *THIS* TIME I'LL AIM AT HIS *FEET* INSTEAD OF HIS CHEST!
BRONK
WHOA--!

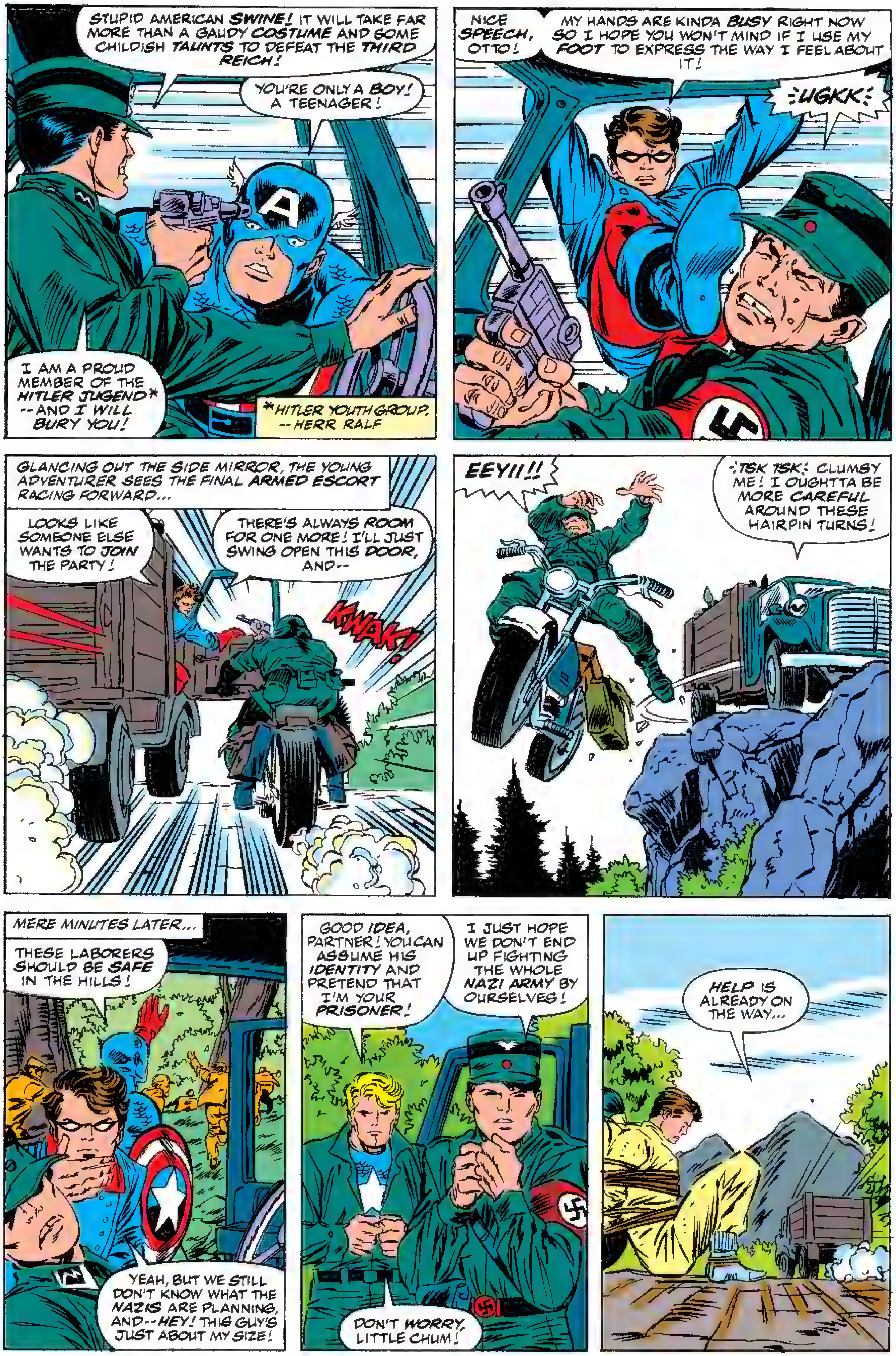

OKAY, FATHER--TALK. WHAT ARE WE DOING BACK HERE? HAVE I CONVINCED YOU I'M NOT READY FOR RETIREMENT YET OR DO WE HAVE TO GO A COUPLE MORE ROUNDS?
DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE BABBLING ABOUT, CAP OLD TIMER--BUT WHERE DO YOU GET OFF CALLING A GUY WHO'S YOUNG ENOUGH TO BE YOUR SON "FATHER"?
HAWKEYE--?!?
NICE OUTFIT, HUH?
YOU'RE FATHER TIME? BUT I DON'T GET IT. HOW'D YOU OPEN UP THAT PORTAL INTO THE PAST? HOW'D YOU MAKE ME GROW OLD? HOW'D--?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, CAP? ALL I DID IS LEAD YOU ON A MERRY CHASE DOWN THESE GRUNGY SIDE STREETS!
YOU MEAN...
WAS I HALLUCINATING THAT TRIP THROUGH THE PORTAL THEN? OR, DID THE REAL FATHER TIME GIVE UP ON ME AND MANIPULATE HAWKEYE INTO PUTTING ON HIS COSTUME FOR SOME REASON?
SO...WHAT'S WITH THE DISGUISE?
I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO TELL.
HAWKEYE, HOW WELL DO YOU THINK YOU COULD DRAW A BOWSTRING WITH BROKEN FINGERS?
HEY, DON'T GET CHEESED AT ME! THIS WASN'T MY IDEA! THE OTHERS PUT ME UP TO IT.
WHAT OTHERS?
WHO ELSE? THE AVENGERS!
COME ON! LET'S TRUCK BACK TO HEADQUARTERS. ALL YOUR QUESTIONS WILL BE ANSWERED THERE.
SOMEHOW I DOUBT IT.

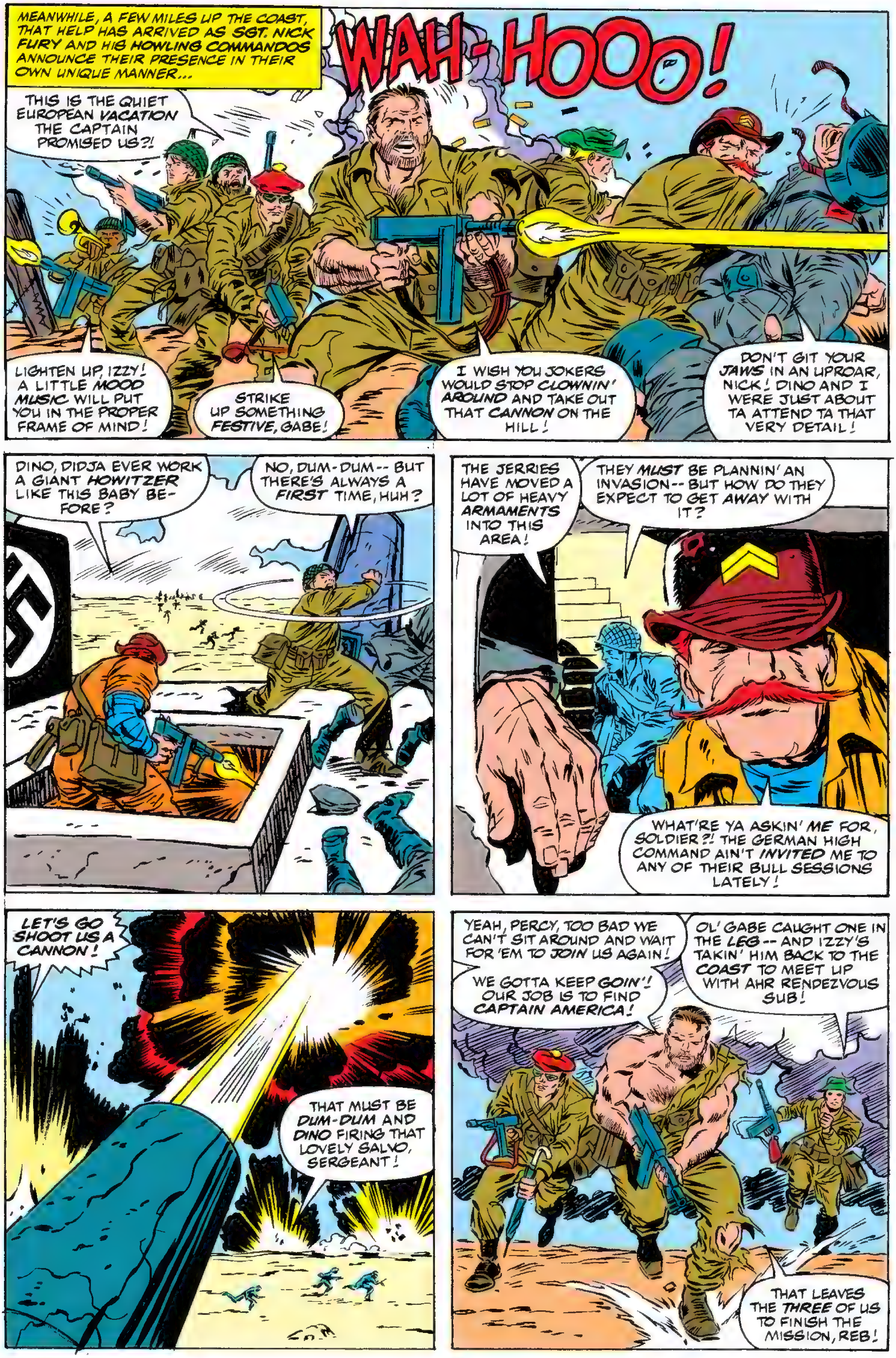

AND...
HAPPY 50th, CAP!
SO THIS IS WHY YOU HAD HAWKEYE LEAD ME ON A WILD GOOSE CHASE... SO YOU COULD GET ME OUT OF HEADQUARTERS LONG ENOUGH TO SET UP A PARTY.
SHUCKS, PEOPLE-- YOU REALLY DIDN'T HAVE TO GO TO ALL THAT BOTHER.
YOU KIDDING? WE'LL TAKE ANY EXCUSE TO PARTY!
HEY! YOU DESERVE IT, CAPARINO! WHAT OTHER SUPER HERO'S BEEN AROUND FOR HALF A CENTURY?
HAPPY 50th, CAP
WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE I WAS ACTIVE ALL THOSE YEARS! DON'T FORGET I WAS IN SUSPENDED ANIMATION FOR A LOT OF IT.
ANYWAY, I'M REALLY TOUCHED BY THIS. THANKS, YOU GUYS.
NOW, SOMEONE HAND ME THE KNIFE SO I CAN CUT THE CAKE.
HAWKEYE SAYS HE PICKED UP THE COSTUME AT A RENTAL STORE. SO THE JURY'S STILL OUT ON WHETHER THERE'S REALLY A FATHER TIME AND WHETHER I REALLY TOOK A TRIP INTO AMERICA'S MYTHIC PAST.
PERHAPS I'LL HAVE TO WAIT TO DISCOVER THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER UNTIL IT REALLY IS TIME FOR ME TO LAY DOWN MY SHIELD AND GO WHEREVER IT IS OLD HEROES GO...
THE END

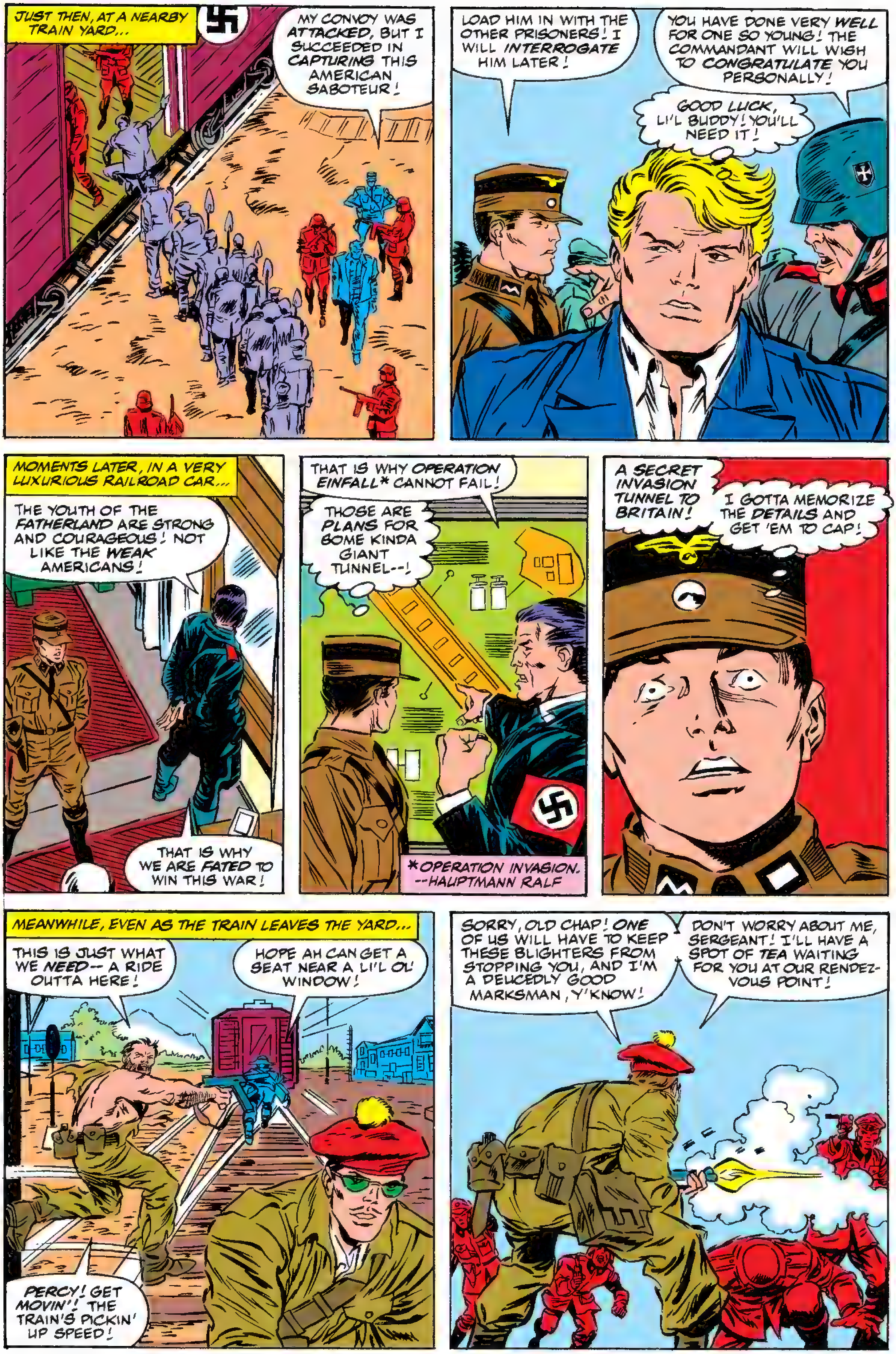

CAPTAIN AMERICA and BUCKY!
IN THE DARING DAYS OF WORLD WAR II!
"FIGHTING SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH... SGT. FURY AND HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS!"
SOMEWHERE ALONG THE NORTHERN COASTLINE OF OCCUPIED FRANCE...
LOOK SHARP, LAD! THE INTELLIGENCE BOYS HAVE PICKED UP RUMBLINGS OF A MAJOR AXIS OFFENSIVE!
THE NAZIS HAVE BEEN MOVING THOUSANDS OF SLAVE LABORERS INTO THIS VICINITY!
OUR MISSION IS TO LEARN WHY!
MAYBE WE CAN HITCH A RIDE WITH THAT CONVOY, AND ASK THEM!

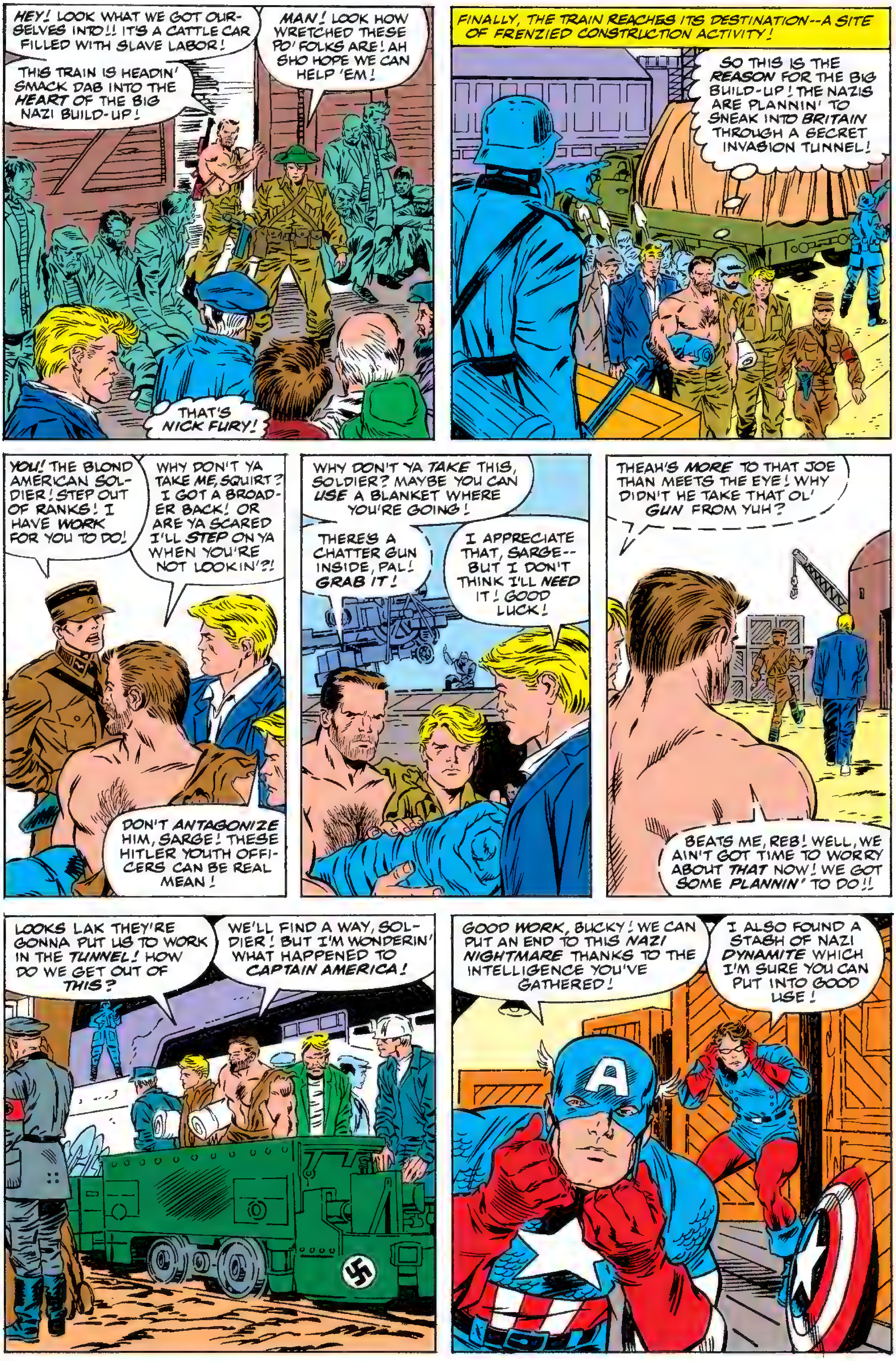
PLOT, PENCILS & WORDS TOM DeFALCO & RON FRENZ
FINISHED ART BOB PETRECCA
LETTERER MICHAEL HEISLER
COLORIST PAUL BECTON
EDITOR RALPH MACCHIO
BASED ON A CLASSIC STORY BY STAN LEE & JACK KIRBY!

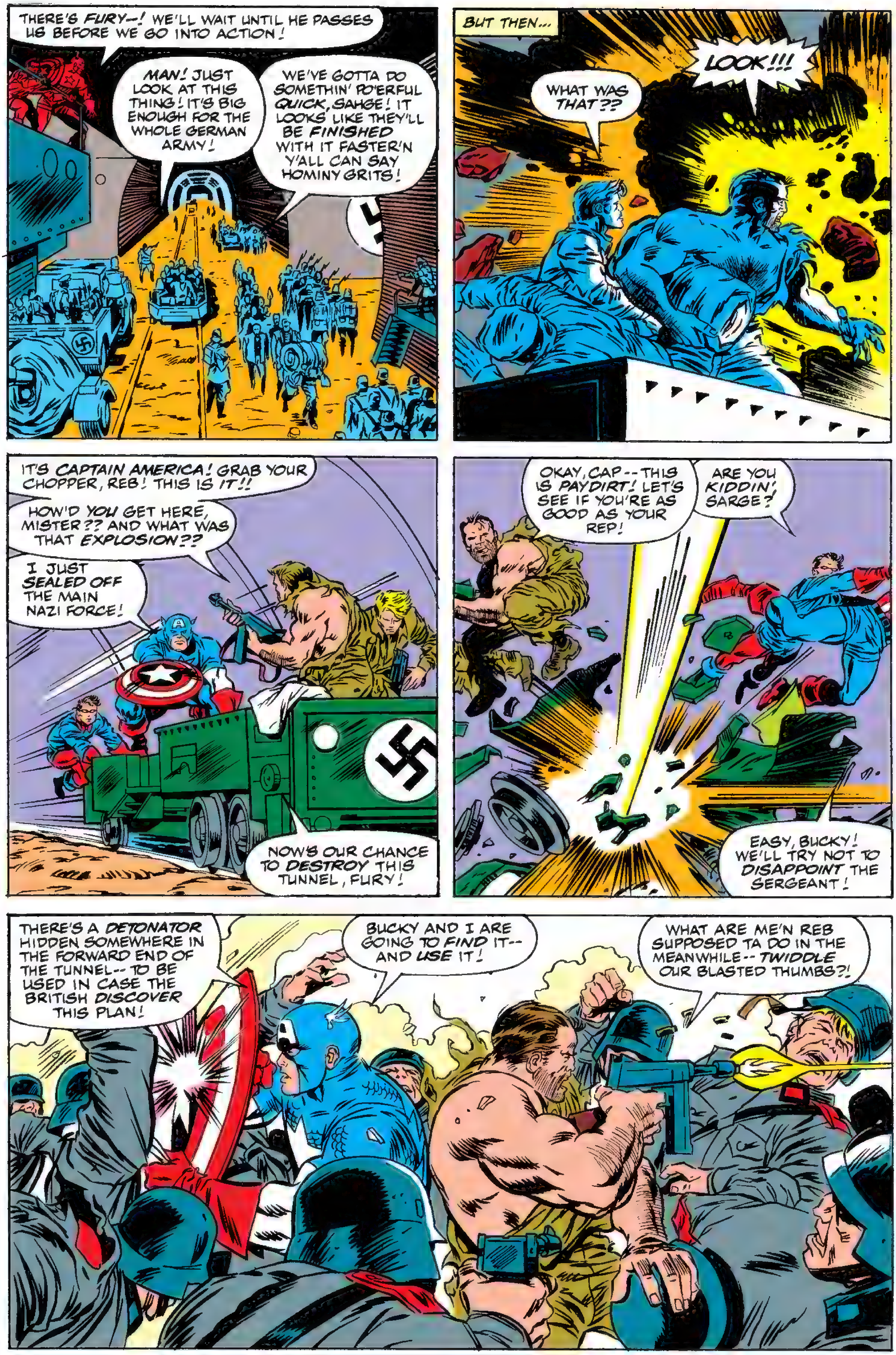

AN EXCELLENT SUGGESTION, MR. BARNES!
I HAD A HUNCH YOU'D LIKE IT, MR. ROGERS!
COSTUMED INVADERS! KILL THEM!
FRITZ SEEMS A LITTLE ANNOYED WITH US! I GUESS HIS SIGHTSEEING TOUR IS ALL BOOKED UP!
I JUST HOPE HE DOESN'T CHARGE US FULL FARE!
I LEFT MY WALLET IN MY OTHER COSTUME!
HE'S BOUND TO UNDERSTAND IF YOU EXPLAIN THE PROBLEM!
YOU'RE RIGHT, CAP! ALL IT TOOK WAS A LITTLE SWEET TALKING... ALONG WITH A SOLID RIGHT TO THE JAW!
UGN
IT ALWAYS PAYS TO BE POLITE!
HIMMEL--!
YOU LOOK TIRED, PAL! SOMEONE ELSE SHOULD TAKE THE WHEEL FOR AWHILE!
YOU MIGHT AS WELL JOIN YOUR MOTOR-CYCLING COMRADE FOR A LITTLE SNOOZE ALONG THE SIDE OF THE ROAD!
URK
YIII!

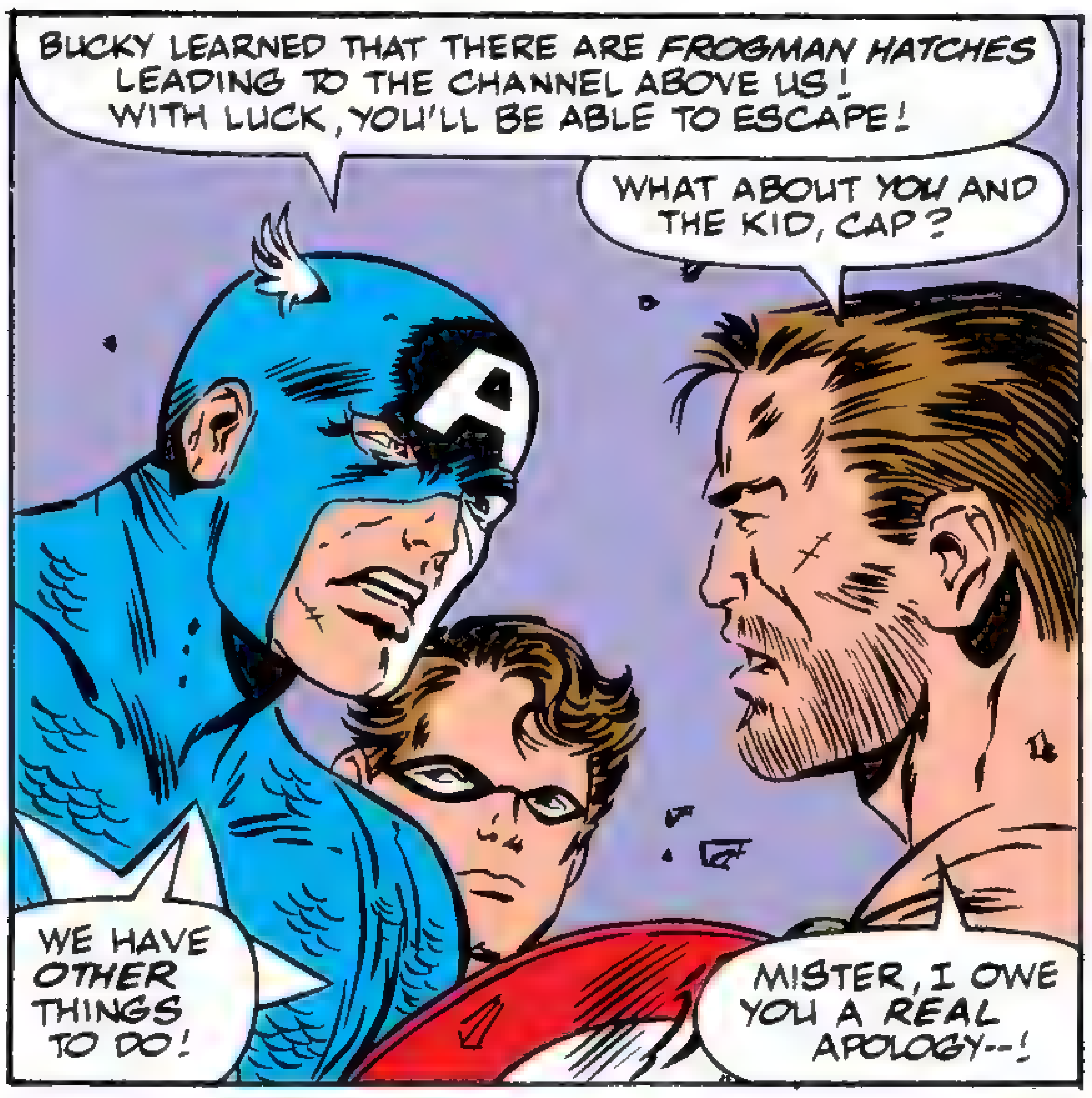

STUPID AMERICAN SWINE! IT WILL TAKE FAR MORE THAN A GAUDY COSTUME AND SOME CHILDISH TAUNTS TO DEFEAT THE THIRD REICH!
YOU'RE ONLY A BOY! A TEENAGER!
I AM A PROUD MEMBER OF THE HITLER JUGEND* --AND I WILL BURY YOU!
*HITLER YOUTH GROUP. --HERR RALF
NICE SPEECH, OTTO!
MY HANDS ARE KINDA BUSY RIGHT NOW SO I HOPE YOU WON'T MIND IF I USE MY FOOT TO EXPRESS THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT IT!
UGKK
GLANCING OUT THE SIDE MIRROR, THE YOUNG ADVENTURER SEES THE FINAL ARMED ESCORT RACING FORWARD...
LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE ELSE WANTS TO JOIN THE PARTY!
THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM FOR ONE MORE! I'LL JUST SWING OPEN THIS DOOR, AND--
KWAK!
EEYII!!
TSK TSK CLUMSY ME! I OUGHTTA BE MORE CAREFUL AROUND THESE HAIRPIN TURNS!
MERE MINUTES LATER...
THESE LABORERS SHOULD BE SAFE IN THE HILLS!
YEAH, BUT WE STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT THE NAZIS ARE PLANNING, AND--HEY! THIS GUY'S JUST ABOUT MY SIZE!
GOOD IDEA, PARTNER! YOU CAN ASSUME HIS IDENTITY AND PRETEND THAT I'M YOUR PRISONER!
I JUST HOPE WE DON'T END UP FIGHTING THE WHOLE NAZI ARMY BY OURSELVES!
DON'T WORRY, LITTLE CHUM!
HELP IS ALREADY ON THE WAY...

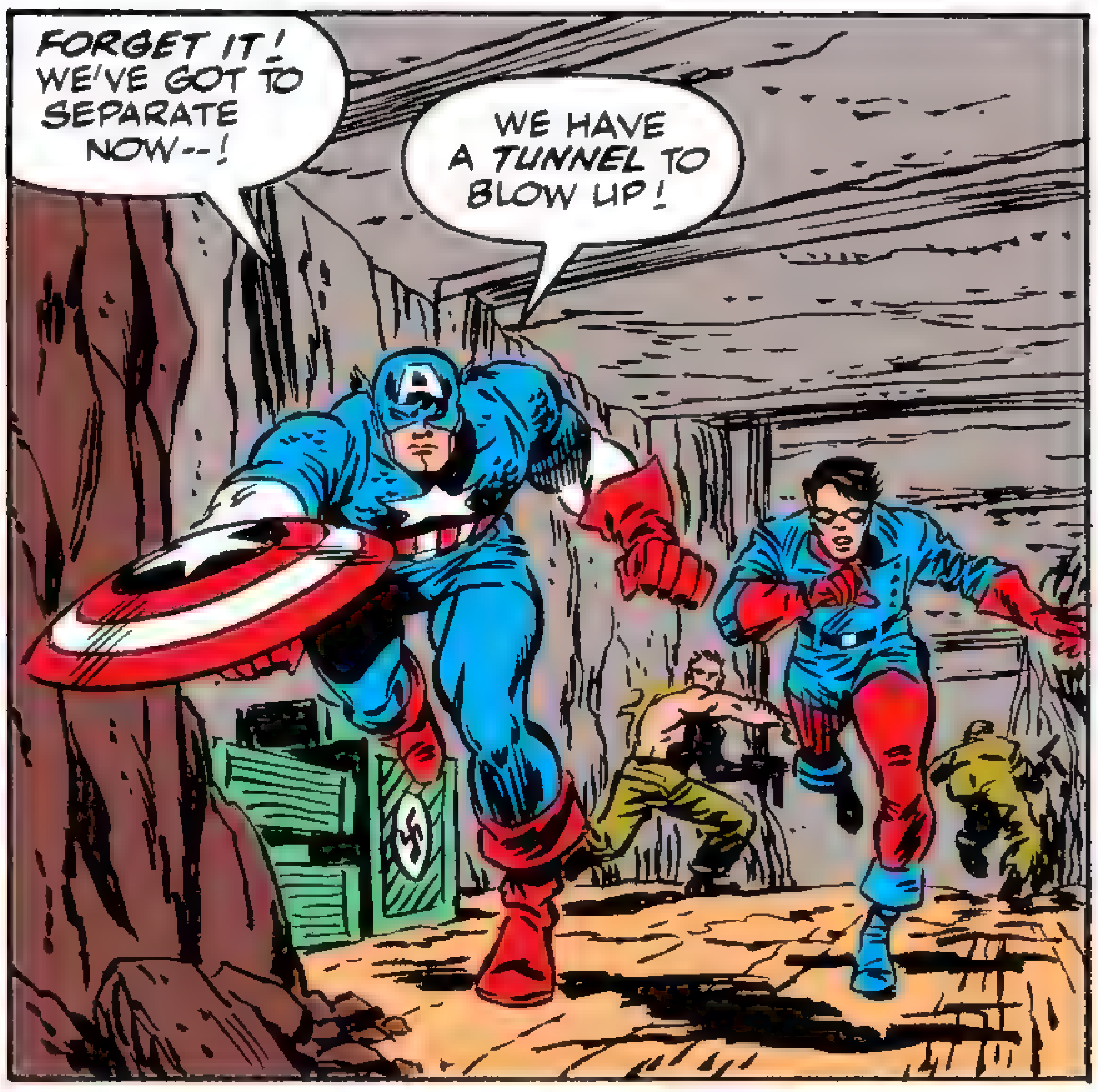

MEANWHILE, A FEW MILES UP THE COAST, THAT HELP HAS ARRIVED AS SGT. NICK FURY AND HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS ANNOUNCE THEIR PRESENCE IN THEIR OWN UNIQUE MANNER...
WAH-HOOOO!
THIS IS THE QUIET EUROPEAN VACATION THE CAPTAIN PROMISED US?!
LIGHTEN UP, IZZY! A LITTLE MOOD MUSIC WILL PUT YOU IN THE PROPER FRAME OF MIND!
STRIKE UP SOMETHING FESTIVE, GABE!
I WISH YOU JOKERS WOULD STOP CLOWNIN' AROUND AND TAKE OUT THAT CANNON ON THE HILL!
DON'T GIT YOUR JAWS IN AN UPROAR, NICK! DINO AND I WERE JUST ABOUT TA ATTEND TA THAT VERY DETAIL!
DINO, DIDJA EVER WORK A GIANT HOWITZER LIKE THIS BABY BEFORE?
NO, DUM-DUM -- BUT THERE'S ALWAYS A FIRST TIME, HUH?
THE JERRIES HAVE MOVED A LOT OF HEAVY ARMAMENTS INTO THIS AREA!
THEY MUST BE PLANNIN' AN INVASION -- BUT HOW DO THEY EXPECT TO GET AWAY WITH IT?
WHAT'RE YA ASKIN' ME FOR, SOLDIER?! THE GERMAN HIGH COMMAND AIN'T INVITED ME TO ANY OF THEIR BULL SESSIONS LATELY!
LET'S GO SHOOT US A CANNON!
THAT MUST BE DUM-DUM AND DINO FIRING THAT LOVELY SALVO, SERGEANT!
YEAH, PERCY, TOO BAD WE CAN'T SIT AROUND AND WAIT FOR 'EM TO JOIN US AGAIN!
WE GOTTA KEEP GOIN'! OUR JOB IS TO FIND CAPTAIN AMERICA!
OL' GABE CAUGHT ONE IN THE LEG -- AND IZZY'S TAKIN' HIM BACK TO THE COAST TO MEET UP WITH AHR RENDEZVOUS SUB!
THAT LEAVES THE THREE OF US TO FINISH THE MISSION, REB!

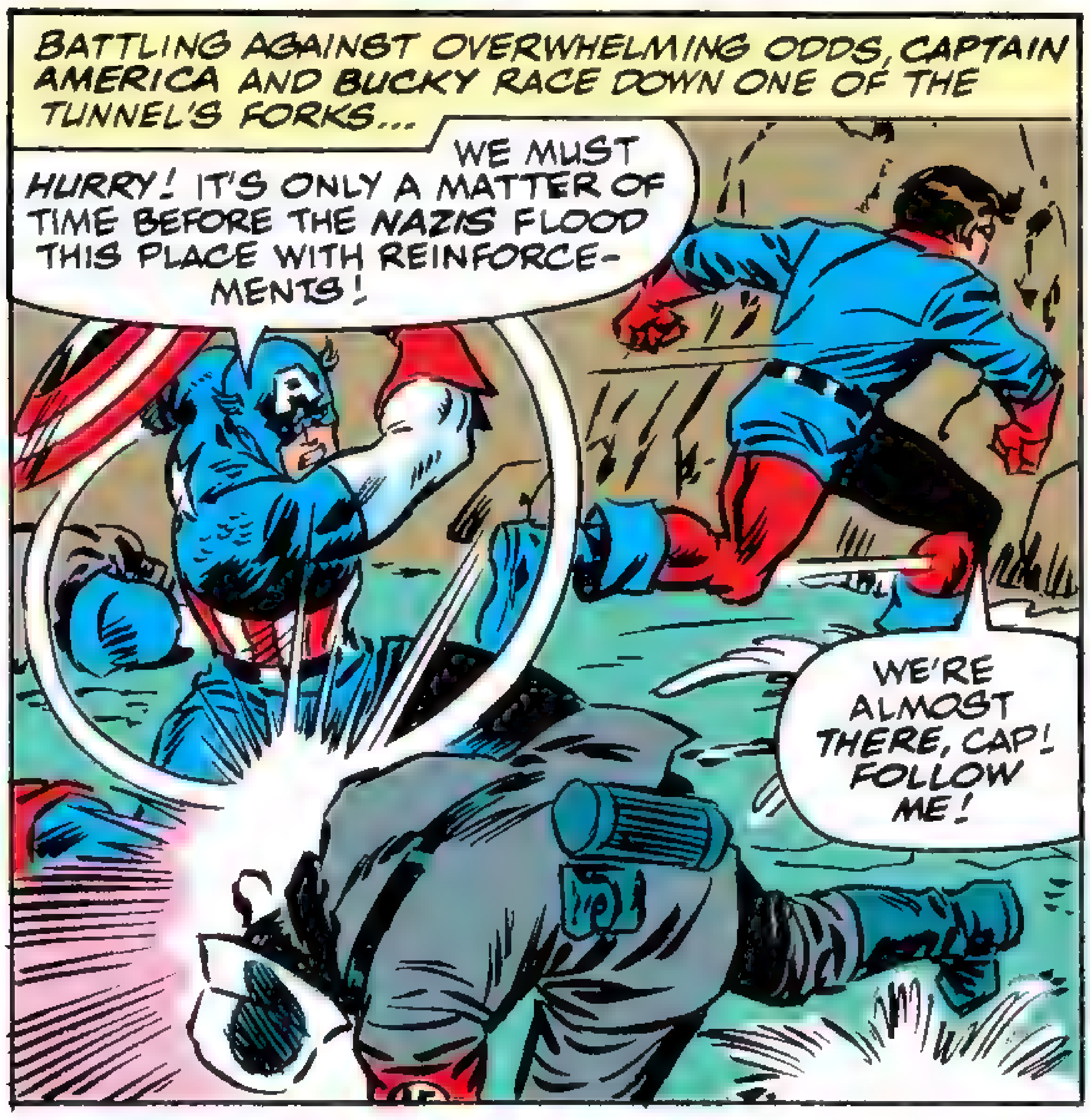

JUST THEN, AT A NEARBY TRAIN YARD...
MY CONVOY WAS ATTACKED, BUT I SUCCEEDED IN CAPTURING THIS AMERICAN SABOTEUR!
LOAD HIM IN WITH THE OTHER PRISONERS! I WILL INTERROGATE HIM LATER!
YOU HAVE DONE VERY WELL FOR ONE SO YOUNG! THE COMMANDANT WILL WISH TO CONGRATULATE YOU PERSONALLY!
GOOD LUCK, LI'L BUDDY! YOU'LL NEED IT!
MOMENTS LATER, IN A VERY LUXURIOUS RAILROAD CAR...
THE YOUTH OF THE FATHERLAND ARE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS! NOT LIKE THE WEAK AMERICANS!
THAT IS WHY WE ARE FATED TO WIN THIS WAR!
THAT IS WHY OPERATION EINFALL* CANNOT FAIL!
THOSE ARE PLANS FOR SOME KINDA GIANT TUNNEL--!
*OPERATION INVASION. --HAUPTMANN RALF
A SECRET INVASION TUNNEL TO BRITAIN!
I GOTTA MEMORIZE THE DETAILS AND GET 'EM TO CAP!
MEANWHILE, EVEN AS THE TRAIN LEAVES THE YARD...
THIS IS JUST WHAT WE NEED-- A RIDE OUTTA HERE!
HOPE AH CAN GET A SEAT NEAR A LI'L OL' WINDOW!
PERCY! GET MOVIN'! THE TRAIN'S PICKIN' UP SPEED!
SORRY, OLD CHAP! ONE OF US WILL HAVE TO KEEP THESE BLIGHTERS FROM STOPPING YOU, AND I'M A DEUCEDLY GOOD MARKSMAN, Y'KNOW!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, SERGEANT! I'LL HAVE A SPOT OF TEA WAITING FOR YOU AT OUR RENDEZVOUS POINT!

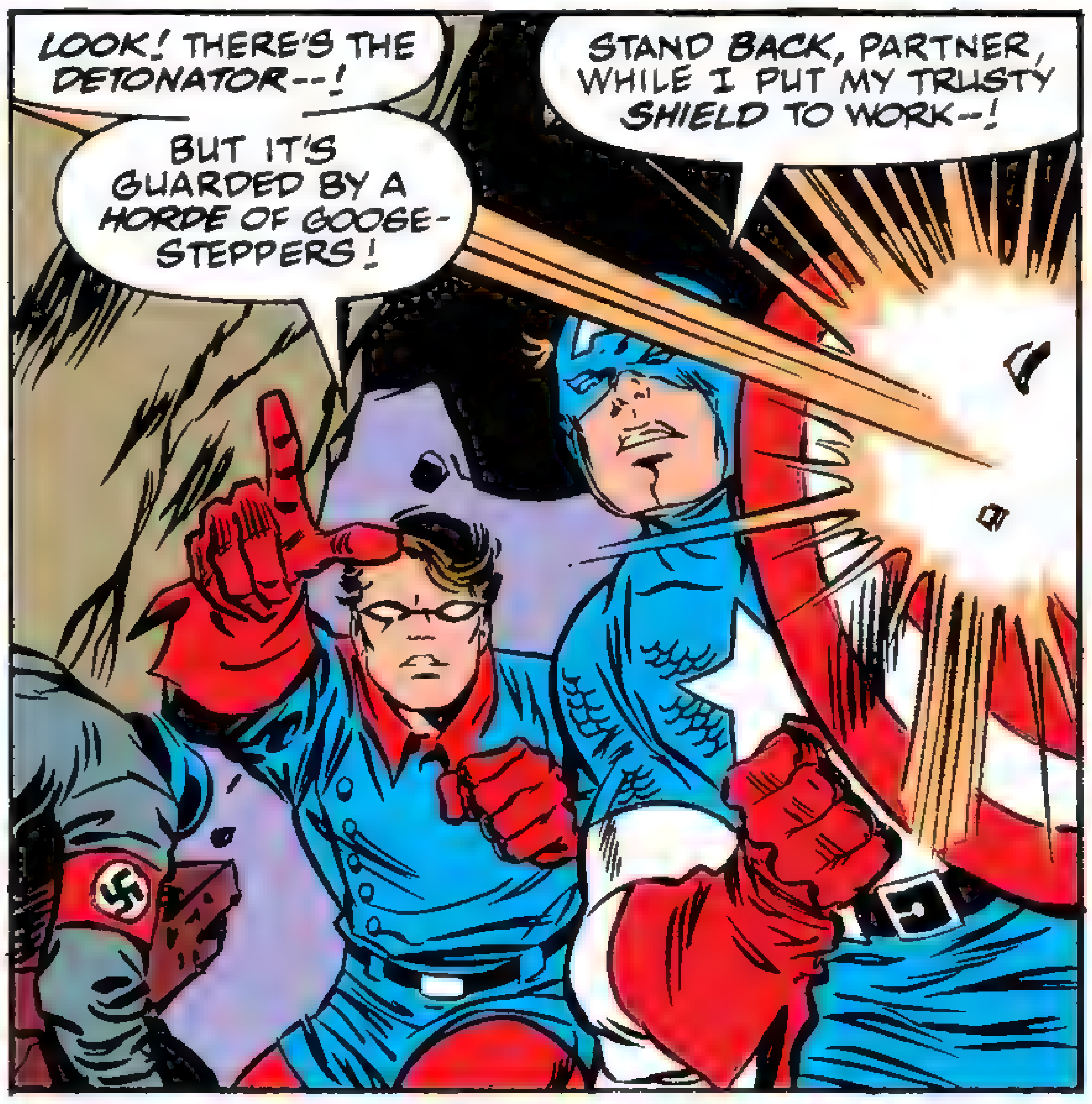

HEY! LOOK WHAT WE GOT OURSELVES INTO!! IT'S A CATTLE CAR FILLED WITH SLAVE LABOR!
THIS TRAIN IS HEADIN' SMACK DAB INTO THE *HEART* OF THE BIG NAZI BUILD-UP!
MAN! LOOK HOW WRETCHED THESE PO' FOLKS ARE! AH SHO HOPE WE CAN HELP 'EM!
THAT'S *NICK FURY!*
FINALLY, THE TRAIN REACHES ITS DESTINATION--A SITE OF FRENZIED CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY!
SO THIS IS THE *REASON* FOR THE BIG BUILD-UP! THE NAZIS ARE PLANNIN' TO SNEAK INTO *BRITAIN* THROUGH A SECRET INVASION TUNNEL!
YOU! THE BLOND AMERICAN SOLDIER! STEP OUT OF RANKS! I HAVE *WORK* FOR YOU TO DO!
WHY DON'T YA TAKE *ME,* SQUIRT? I GOT A BROADER BACK! OR ARE YA SCARED I'LL *STEP* ON YA WHEN YOU'RE NOT LOOKIN'?!
DON'T *ANTAGONIZE* HIM, SARGE! THESE HITLER YOUTH OFFICERS CAN BE REAL MEAN!
WHY DON'T YA *TAKE* THIS, SOLDIER? MAYBE YOU CAN *USE* A BLANKET WHERE YOU'RE GOING!
THERE'S A CHATTER GUN INSIDE, PAL! *GRAB IT!*
I APPRECIATE THAT, SARGE--BUT I DON'T THINK I'LL *NEED* IT! GOOD LUCK!
THEAH'S *MORE* TO THAT JOE THAN MEETS THE EYE! WHY DIDN'T HE TAKE THAT OL' *GUN* FROM YUH?
BEATS ME, REB! WELL, WE AIN'T GOT TIME TO WORRY ABOUT *THAT* NOW! WE GOT SOME *PLANNIN'* TO DO!!
LOOKS LAK THEY'RE GONNA PUT US TO WORK IN THE *TUNNEL!* HOW DO WE GET OUT OF *THIS?*
WE'LL FIND A WAY, SOLDIER! BUT I'M WONDERIN' WHAT HAPPENED TO *CAPTAIN AMERICA!*
GOOD *WORK,* BUCKY! WE CAN PUT AN END TO THIS *NAZI NIGHTMARE* THANKS TO THE INTELLIGENCE YOU'VE GATHERED!
I ALSO FOUND A STASH OF NAZI *DYNAMITE* WHICH I'M SURE YOU CAN PUT INTO GOOD USE!

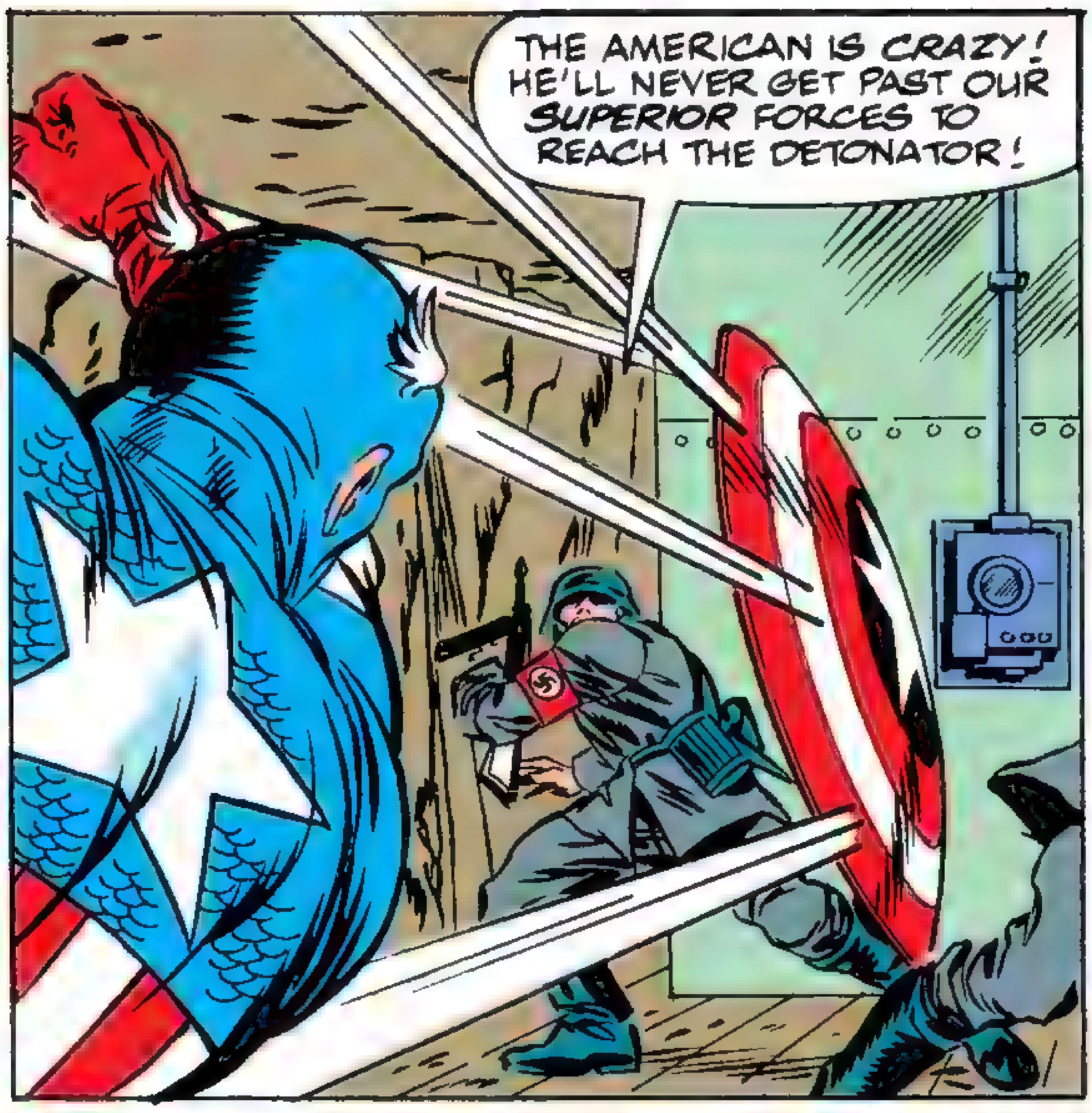

THERE'S FURY--! WE'LL WAIT UNTIL HE PASSES US BEFORE WE GO INTO ACTION!
MAN! JUST LOOK AT THIS THING! IT'S BIG ENOUGH FOR THE WHOLE GERMAN ARMY!
WE'VE GOTTA DO SOMETHIN' PO'ERFUL QUICK, SAHGE! IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'LL BE FINISHED WITH IT FASTER'N Y'ALL CAN SAY HOMINY GRITS!
BUT THEN...
WHAT WAS THAT??
LOOK!!!
IT'S CAPTAIN AMERICA! GRAB YOUR CHOPPER, REB! THIS IS IT!!
HOW'D YOU GET HERE, MISTER?? AND WHAT WAS THAT EXPLOSION??
I JUST SEALED OFF THE MAIN NAZI FORCE!
NOW'S OUR CHANCE TO DESTROY THIS TUNNEL, FURY!
OKAY, CAP--THIS IS PAYDIRT! LET'S SEE IF YOU'RE AS GOOD AS YOUR REP!
ARE YOU KIDDIN', SARGE?
EASY, BUCKY! WE'LL TRY NOT TO DISAPPOINT THE SERGEANT!
THERE'S A DETONATOR HIDDEN SOMEWHERE IN THE FORWARD END OF THE TUNNEL--TO BE USED IN CASE THE BRITISH DISCOVER THIS PLAN!
BUCKY AND I ARE GOING TO FIND IT--AND USE IT!
WHAT ARE ME'N REB SUPPOSED TA DO IN THE MEANWHILE--TWIDDLE OUR BLASTED THUMBS?!

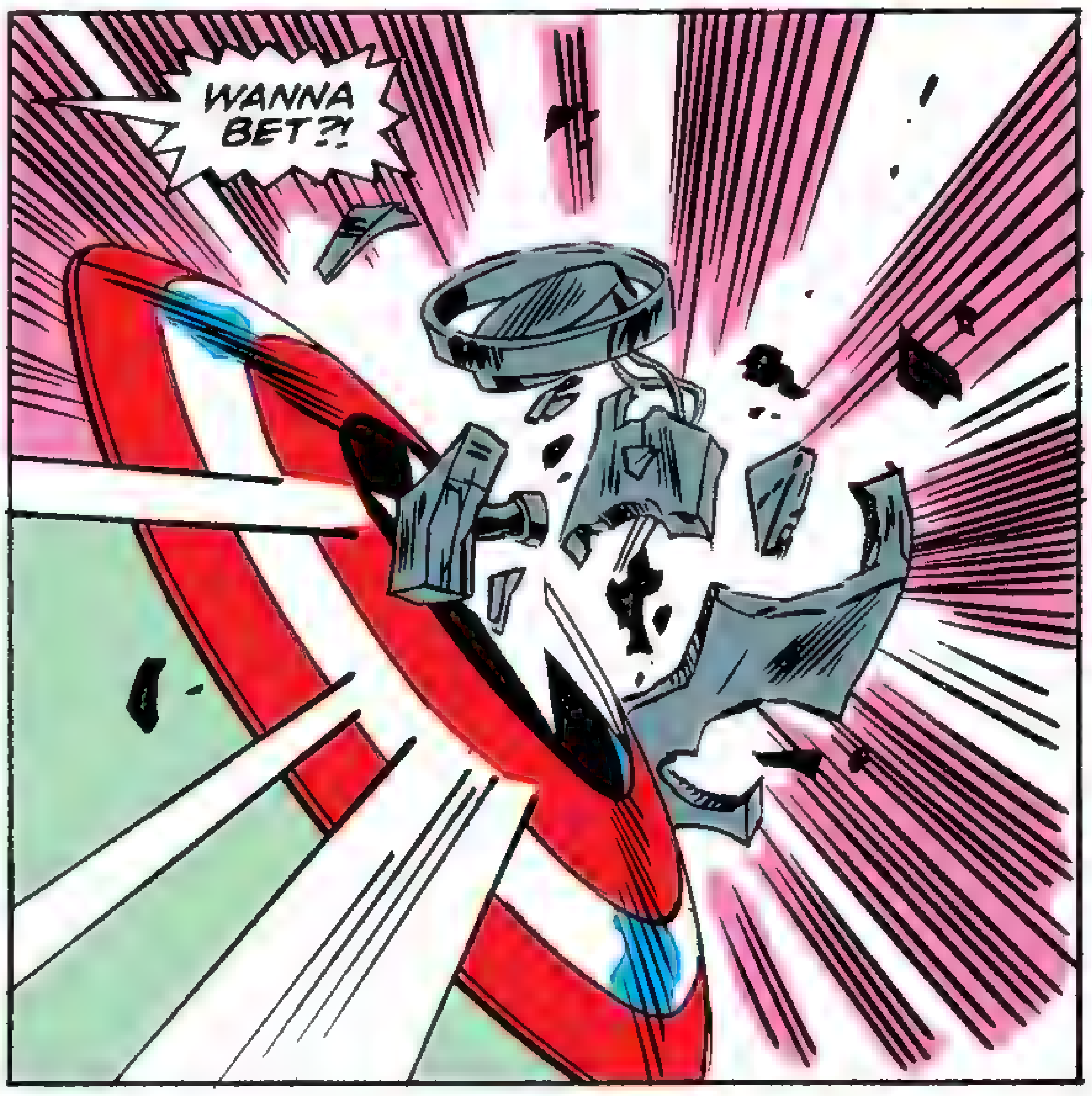

BUCKY LEARNED THAT THERE ARE *FROGMAN HATCHES* LEADING TO THE CHANNEL ABOVE US! WITH LUCK, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO ESCAPE!
WHAT ABOUT *YOU* AND THE KID, CAP?
WE HAVE *OTHER* THINGS TO DO!
MISTER, I OWE YOU A *REAL* APOLOGY--!

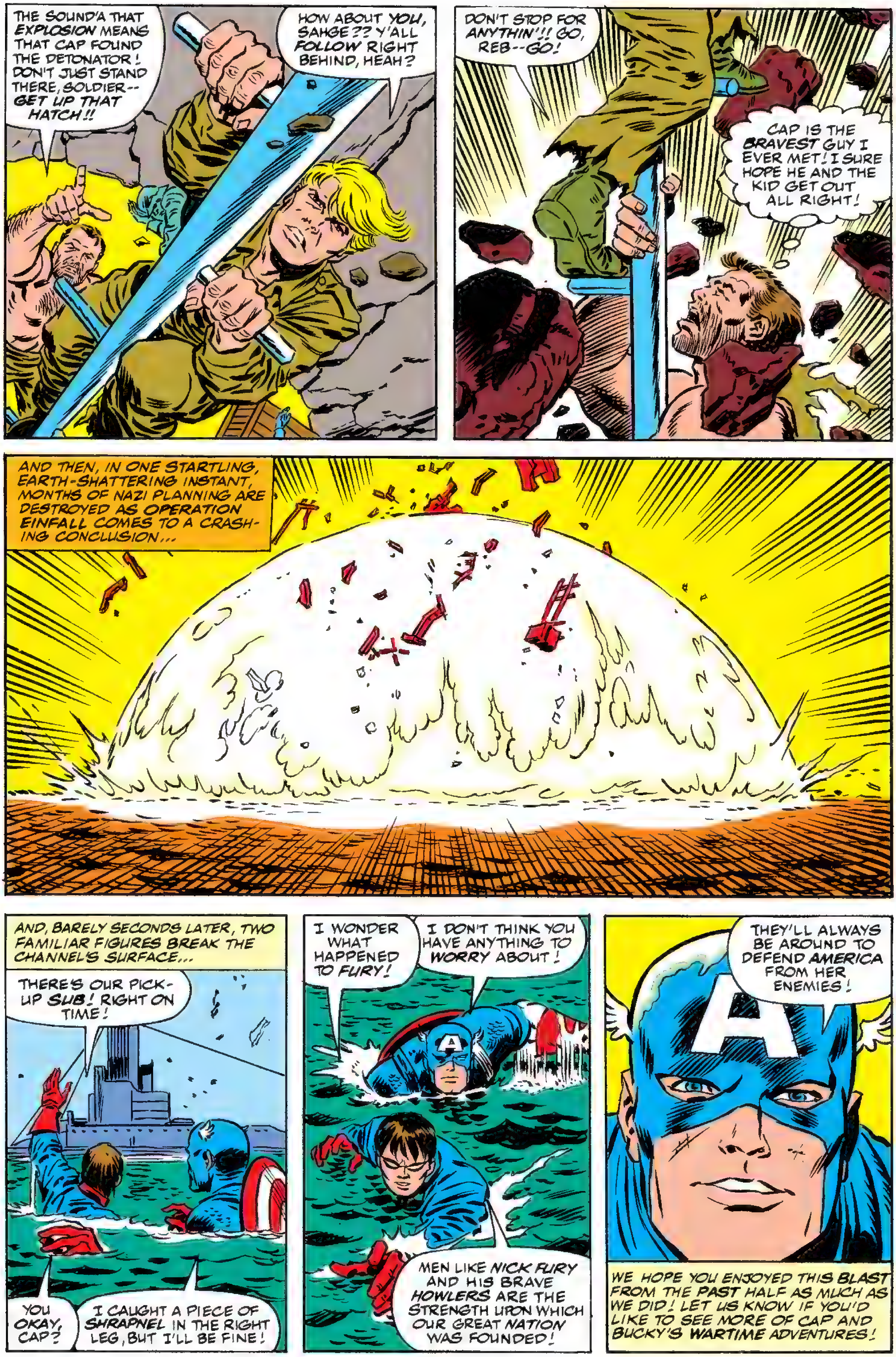

FORGET IT! WE'VE GOT TO SEPARATE NOW--!
WE HAVE A *TUNNEL* TO BLOW UP!


BATTLING AGAINST OVERWHELMING ODDS, CAPTAIN AMERICA AND BUCKY RACE DOWN ONE OF THE TUNNEL'S FORKS...
WE MUST *HURRY!* IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE *NAZIS* FLOOD THIS PLACE WITH REINFORCEMENTS!
WE'RE ALMOST *THERE, CAP! FOLLOW ME!*


LOOK! THERE'S THE *DETONATOR*--!
BUT IT'S GUARDED BY A *HORDE* OF GOOSE-STEPPERS!
STAND *BACK*, PARTNER, WHILE I PUT MY TRUSTY *SHIELD* TO WORK--!

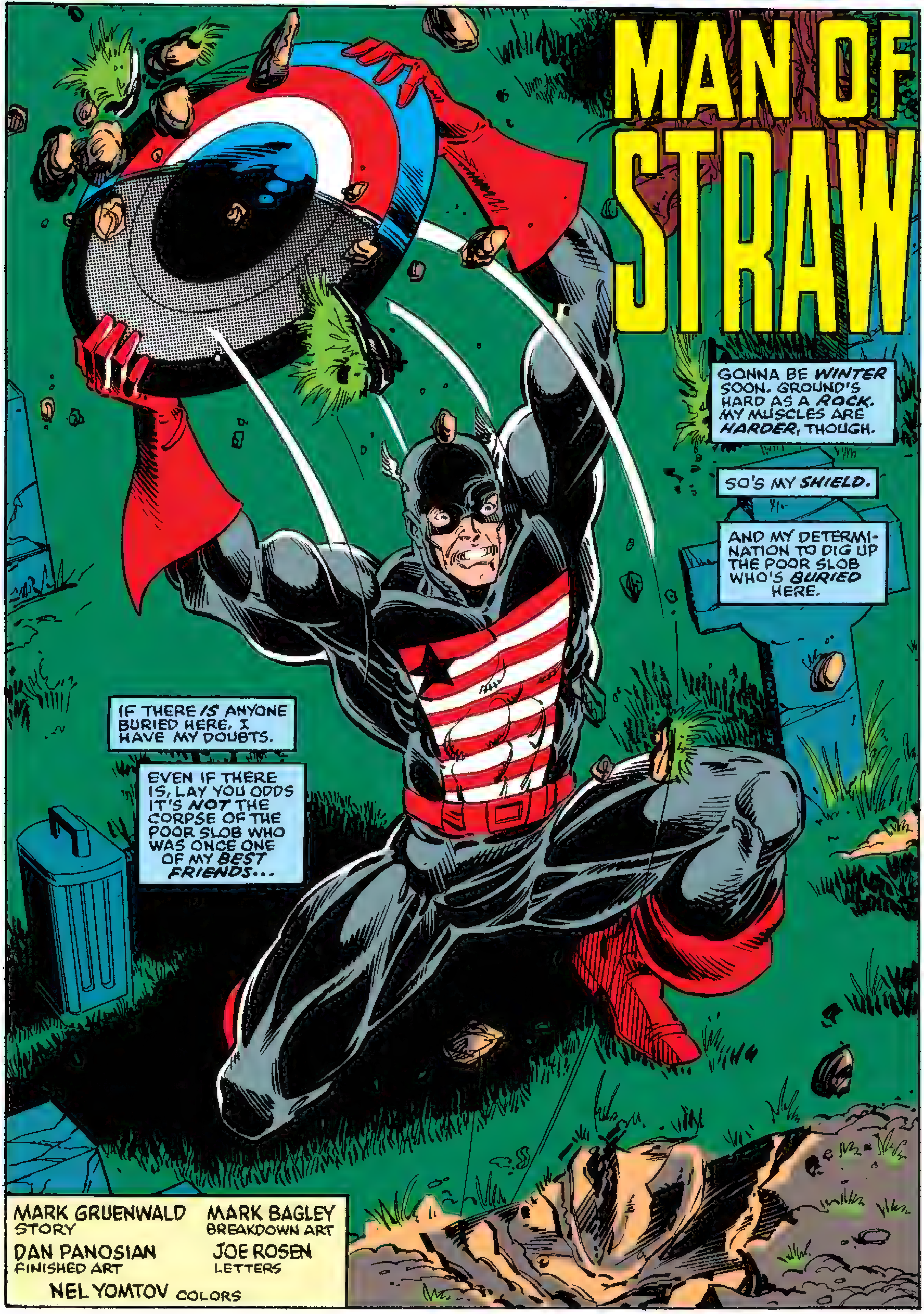

THE AMERICAN IS *CRAZY!* HE'LL NEVER GET PAST OUR *SUPERIOR* FORCES TO REACH THE DETONATOR!

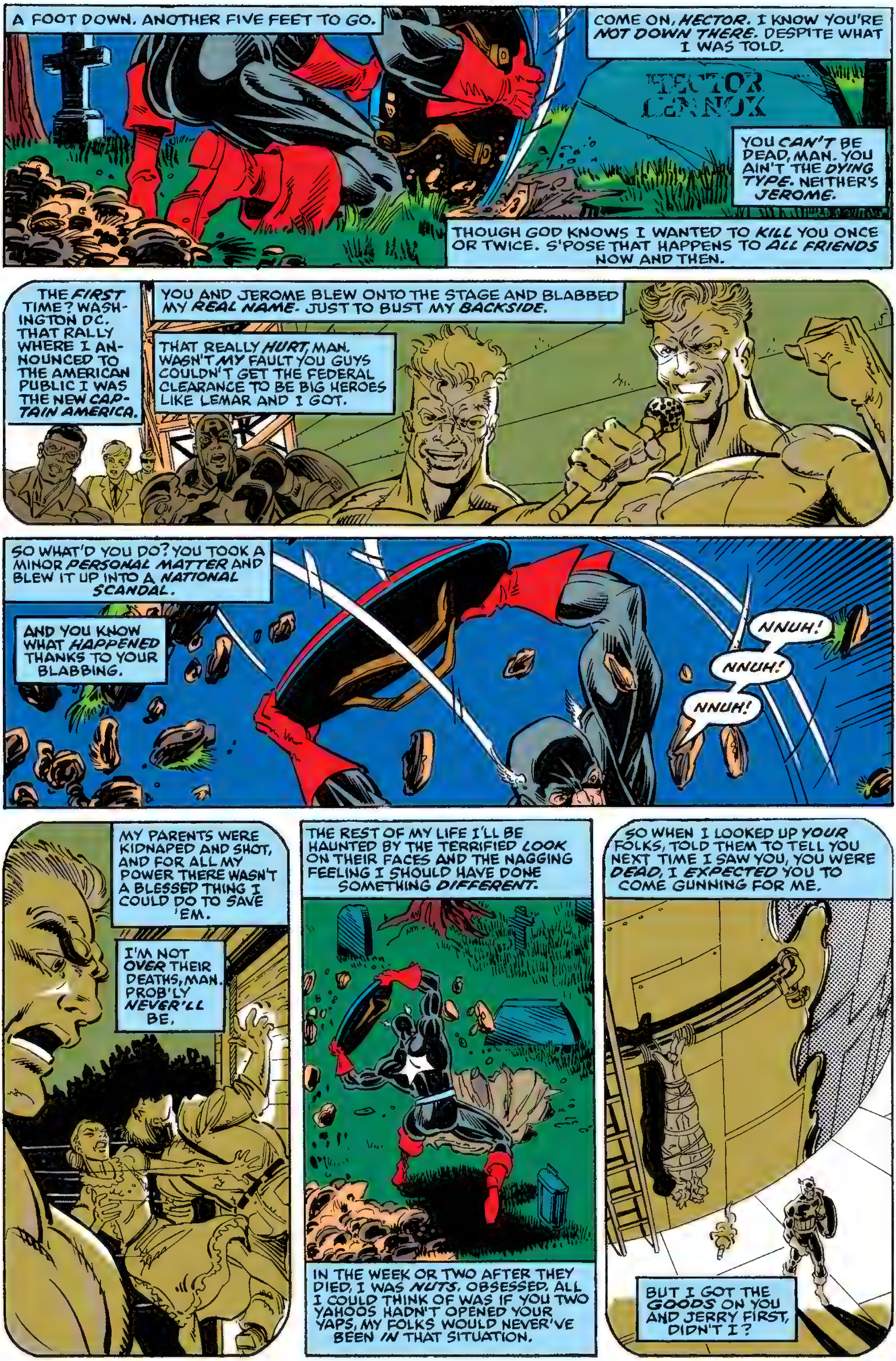

WANNA BET?!

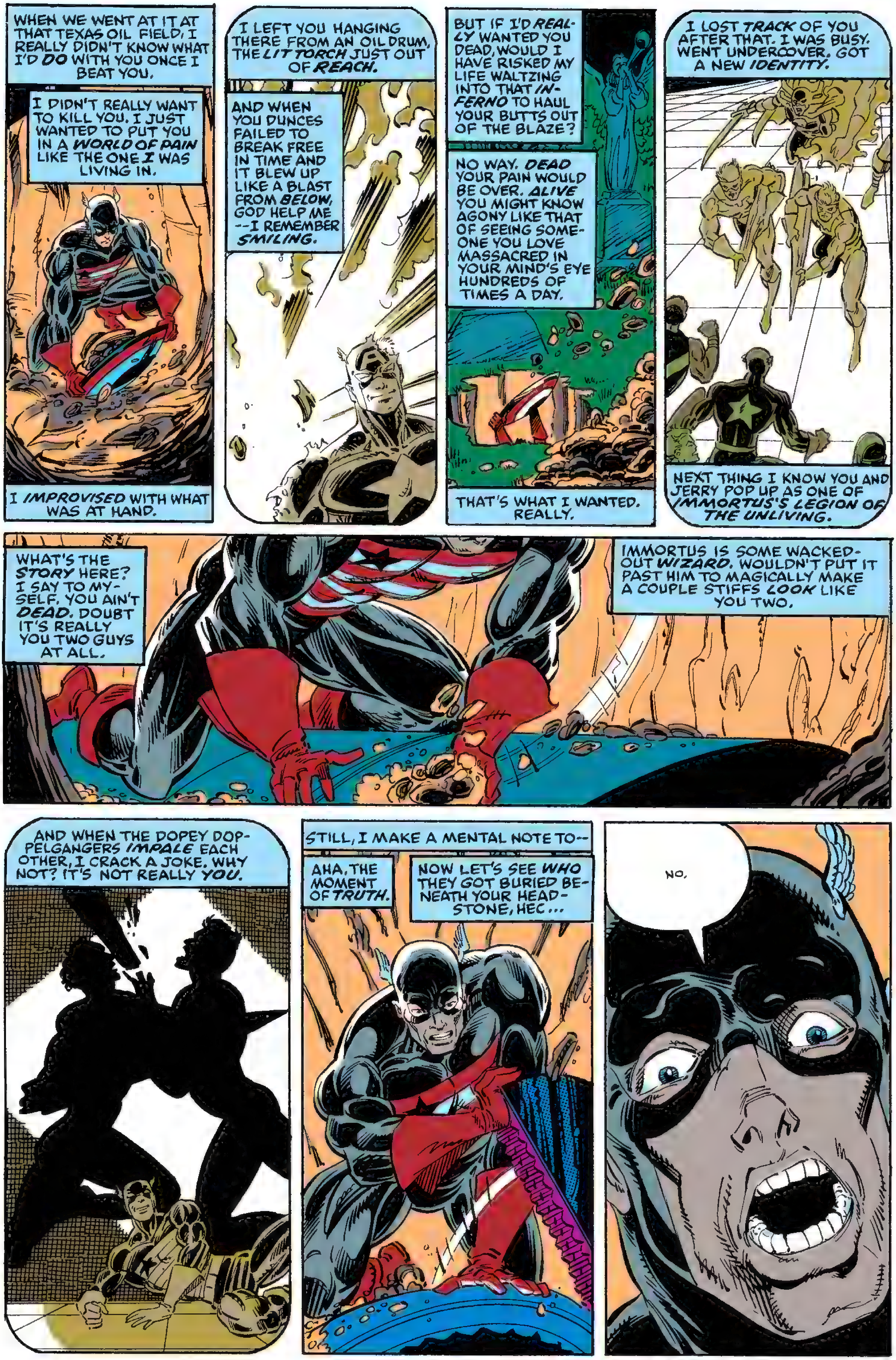

THE SOUND'A THAT EXPLOSION MEANS THAT CAP FOUND THE DETONATOR! DON'T JUST STAND THERE, SOLDIER-- GET UP THAT HATCH!!
HOW ABOUT YOU, SAHGE?? Y'ALL FOLLOW RIGHT BEHIND, HEAH?
DON'T STOP FOR ANYTHIN'!! GO, REB--GO!
CAP IS THE BRAVEST GUY I EVER MET! I SURE HOPE HE AND THE KID GET OUT ALL RIGHT!
AND THEN, IN ONE STARTLING, EARTH-SHATTERING INSTANT, MONTHS OF NAZI PLANNING ARE DESTROYED AS OPERATION EINFALL COMES TO A CRASHING CONCLUSION...
AND, BARELY SECONDS LATER, TWO FAMILIAR FIGURES BREAK THE CHANNEL'S SURFACE...
THERE'S OUR PICK-UP SUB! RIGHT ON TIME!
YOU OKAY, CAP?
I CAUGHT A PIECE OF SHRAPNEL IN THE RIGHT LEG, BUT I'LL BE FINE!
I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO FURY!
I DON'T THINK YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO WORRY ABOUT!
MEN LIKE NICK FURY AND HIS BRAVE HOWLERS ARE THE STRENGTH UPON WHICH OUR GREAT NATION WAS FOUNDED!
THEY'LL ALWAYS BE AROUND TO DEFEND AMERICA FROM HER ENEMIES!
WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED THIS BLAST FROM THE PAST HALF AS MUCH AS WE DID! LET US KNOW IF YOU'D LIKE TO SEE MORE OF CAP AND BUCKY'S WARTIME ADVENTURES!

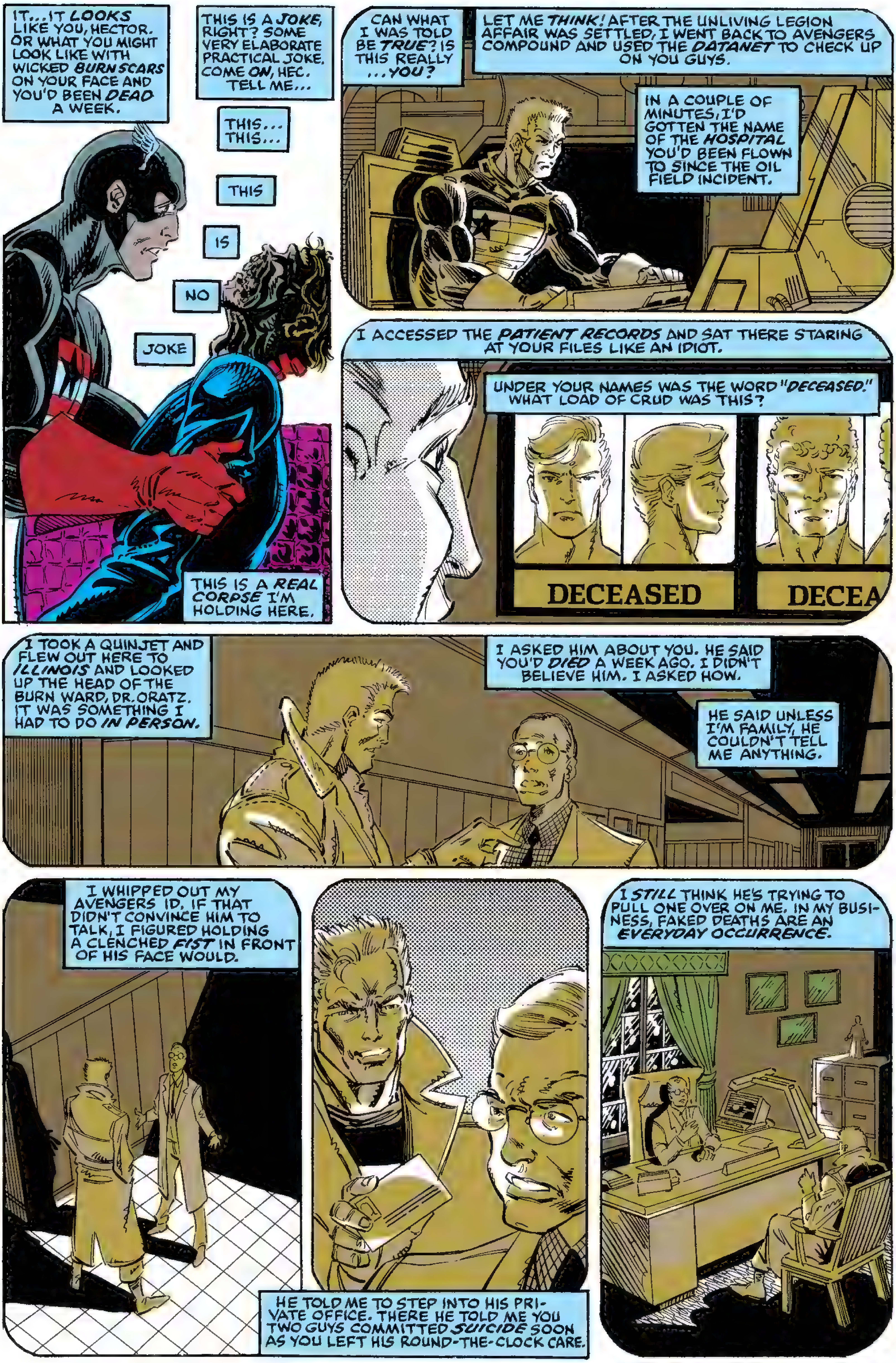
Stan Lee PRESENTS:

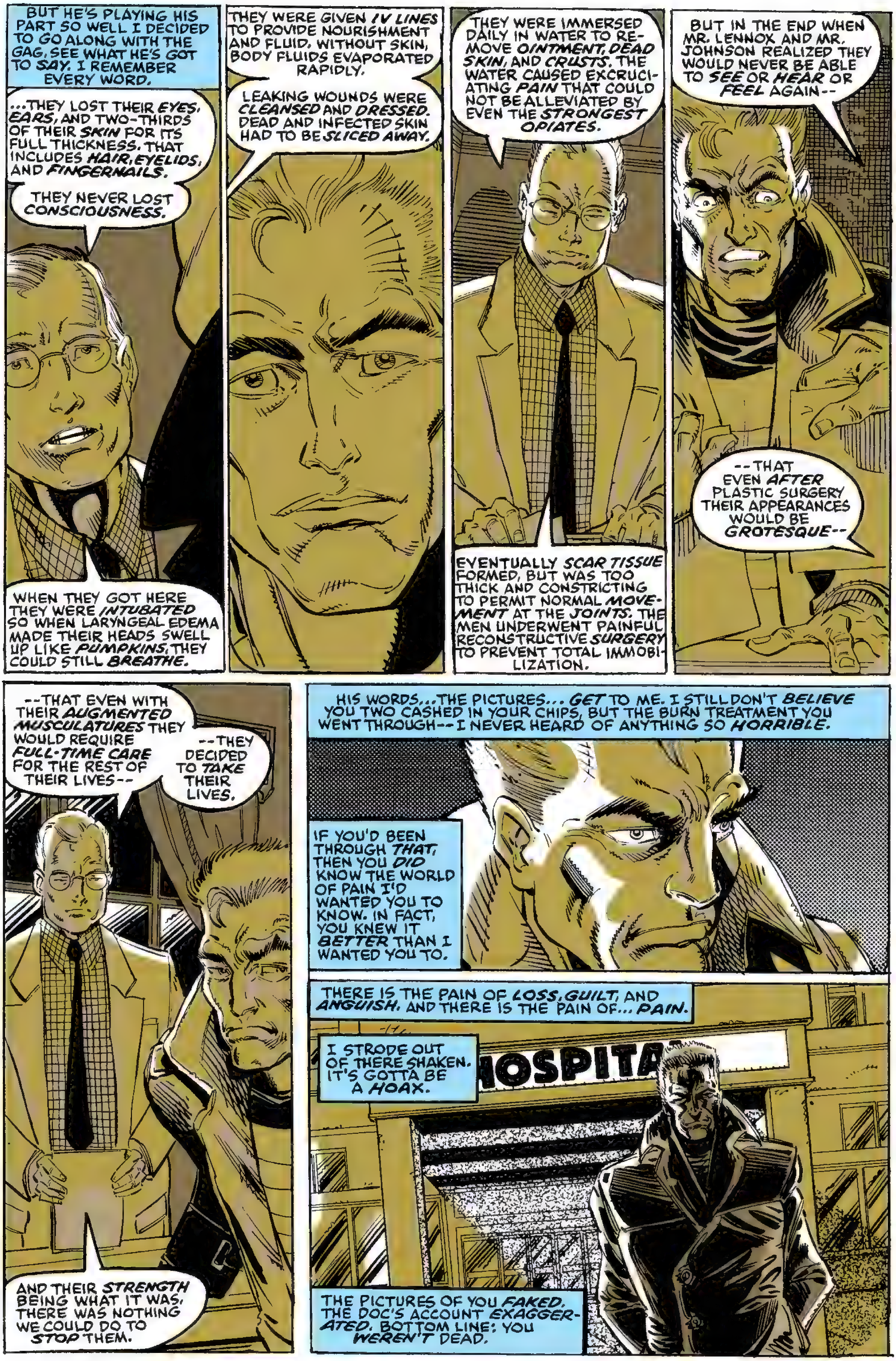
U.S.AGENT

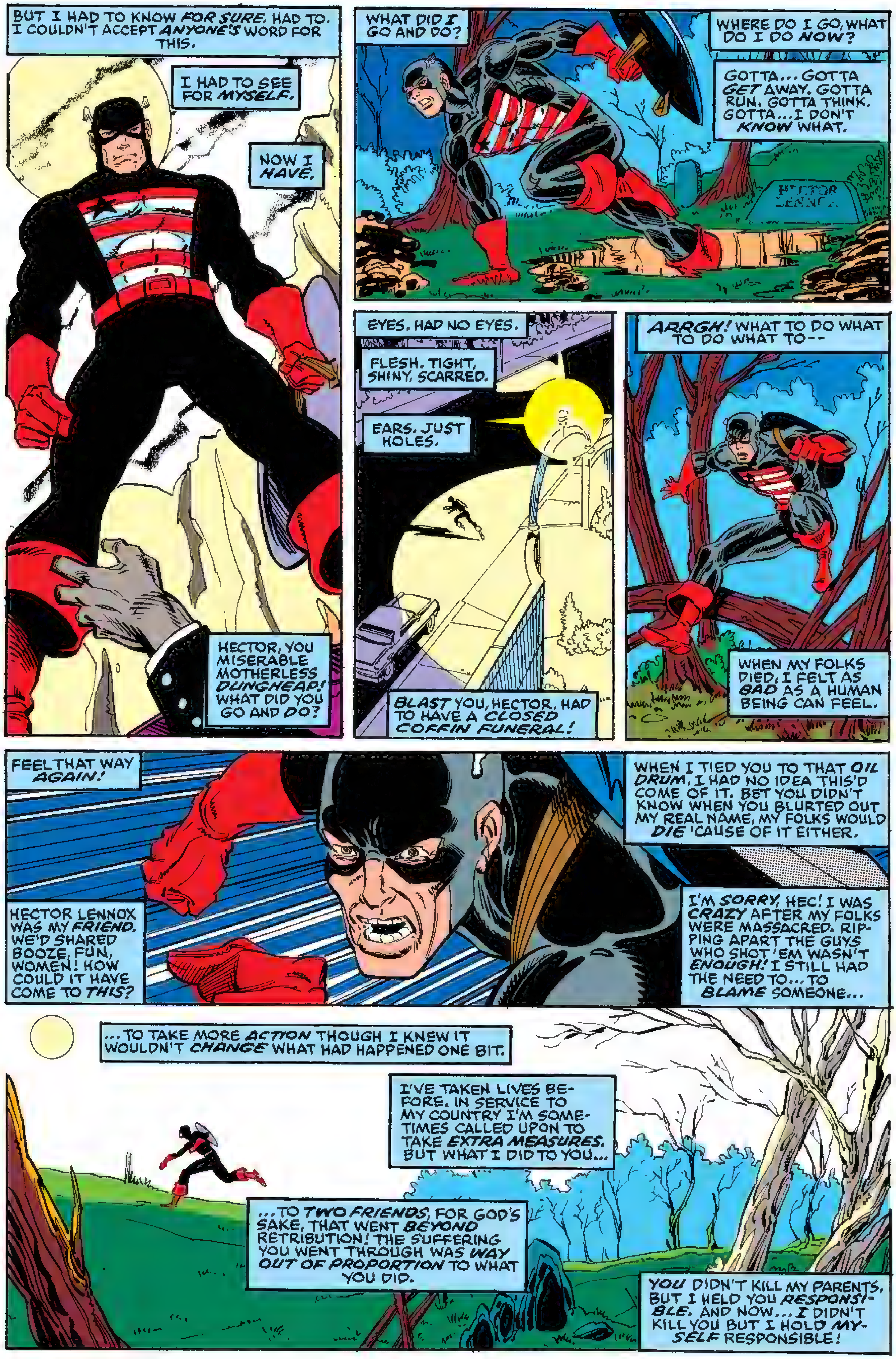

MAN OF STRAW
GONNA BE *WINTER* SOON. GROUND'S HARD AS A *ROCK.* MY MUSCLES ARE *HARDER,* THOUGH.
SO'S MY *SHIELD.*
AND MY DETERMINATION TO DIG UP THE POOR SLOB WHO'S *BURIED* HERE.
IF THERE *IS* ANYONE BURIED HERE. I HAVE MY DOUBTS.
EVEN IF THERE IS, LAY YOU ODDS IT'S *NOT* THE CORPSE OF THE POOR SLOB WHO WAS ONCE ONE OF MY *BEST FRIENDS...*
MARK GRUENWALD STORY
MARK BAGLEY BREAKDOWN ART
DAN PANOSIAN FINISHED ART
JOE ROSEN LETTERS
NEL YOMTOV COLORS

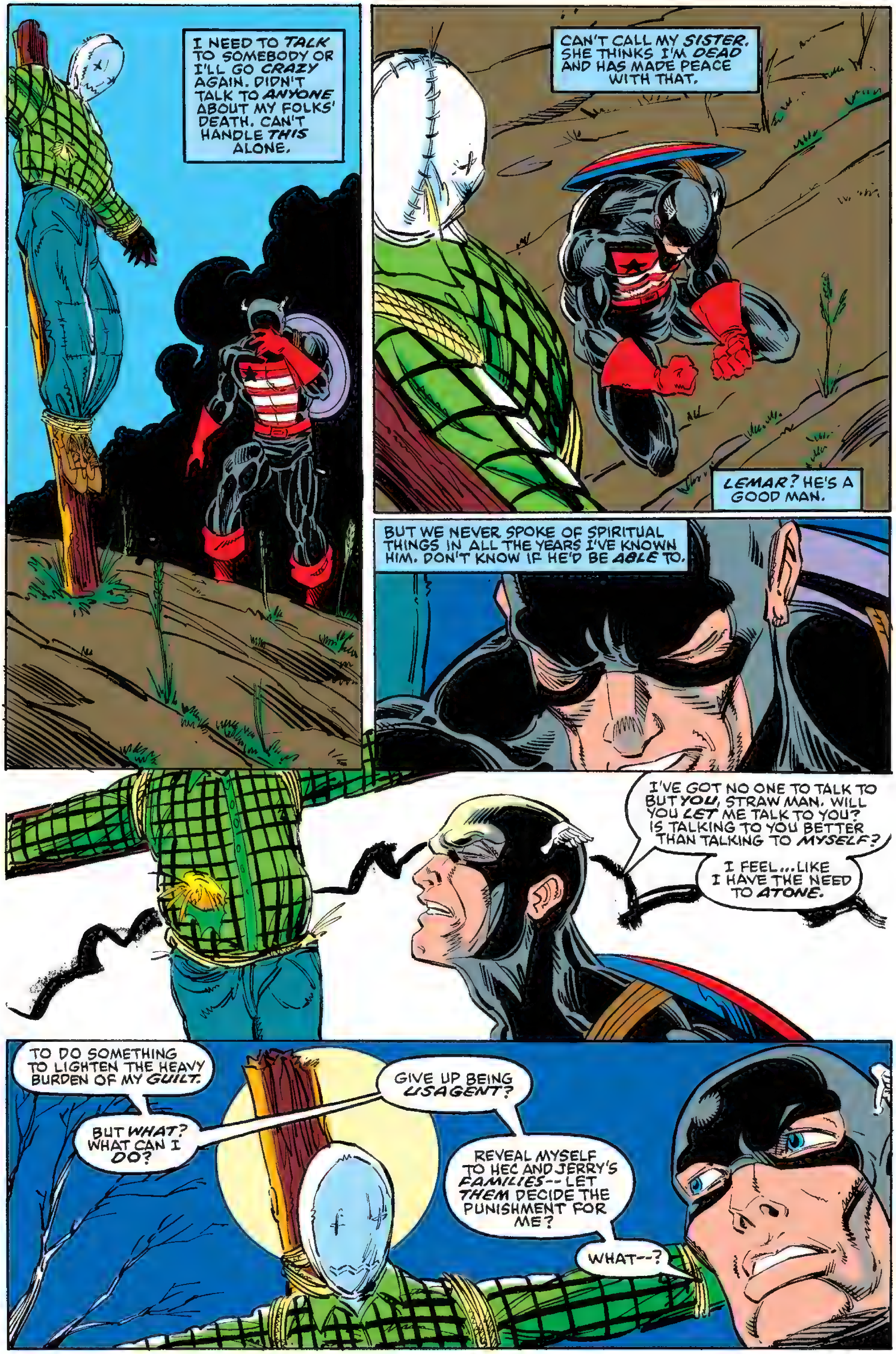

A FOOT DOWN. ANOTHER FIVE FEET TO GO.
COME ON, *HECTOR*. I KNOW YOU'RE *NOT DOWN THERE*. DESPITE WHAT I WAS TOLD.
HECTOR LENNOX
YOU *CAN'T* BE DEAD, MAN. YOU AIN'T THE *DYING TYPE*. NEITHER'S *JEROME*.
THOUGH GOD KNOWS I WANTED TO *KILL* YOU ONCE OR TWICE. S'POSE THAT HAPPENS TO *ALL FRIENDS* NOW AND THEN.
THE *FIRST* TIME? WASHINGTON DC. THAT RALLY WHERE I ANNOUNCED TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC I WAS THE NEW *CAPTAIN AMERICA*.
YOU AND JEROME BLEW ONTO THE STAGE AND BLABBED MY *REAL NAME*. JUST TO BUST MY *BACKSIDE*.
THAT REALLY *HURT*, MAN. WASN'T *MY* FAULT YOU GUYS COULDN'T GET THE FEDERAL CLEARANCE TO BE BIG HEROES LIKE LEMAR AND I GOT.
SO WHAT'D YOU DO? YOU TOOK A MINOR *PERSONAL MATTER* AND BLEW IT UP INTO A *NATIONAL SCANDAL*.
AND YOU KNOW WHAT *HAPPENED* THANKS TO YOUR BLABBING.
NNUH!
NNUH!
NNUH!
MY PARENTS WERE KIDNAPED AND SHOT, AND FOR ALL MY POWER THERE WASN'T A BLESSED THING I COULD DO TO SAVE 'EM.
I'M NOT *OVER* THEIR DEATHS, MAN. PROB'LY *NEVER'LL* BE.
THE REST OF MY LIFE I'LL BE HAUNTED BY THE TERRIFIED *LOOK* ON THEIR FACES AND THE NAGGING FEELING I SHOULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING *DIFFERENT*.
IN THE WEEK OR TWO AFTER THEY DIED, I WAS *NUTS*. OBSESSED. ALL I COULD THINK OF WAS IF YOU TWO YAHOOS HADN'T OPENED YOUR YAPS, MY FOLKS WOULD NEVER'VE BEEN *IN* THAT SITUATION.
SO WHEN I LOOKED UP *YOUR* FOLKS, TOLD THEM TO TELL YOU NEXT TIME I SAW YOU, YOU WERE *DEAD*, I *EXPECTED* YOU TO COME GUNNING FOR ME.
BUT I GOT THE *GOODS* ON YOU AND JERRY FIRST, DIDN'T I?

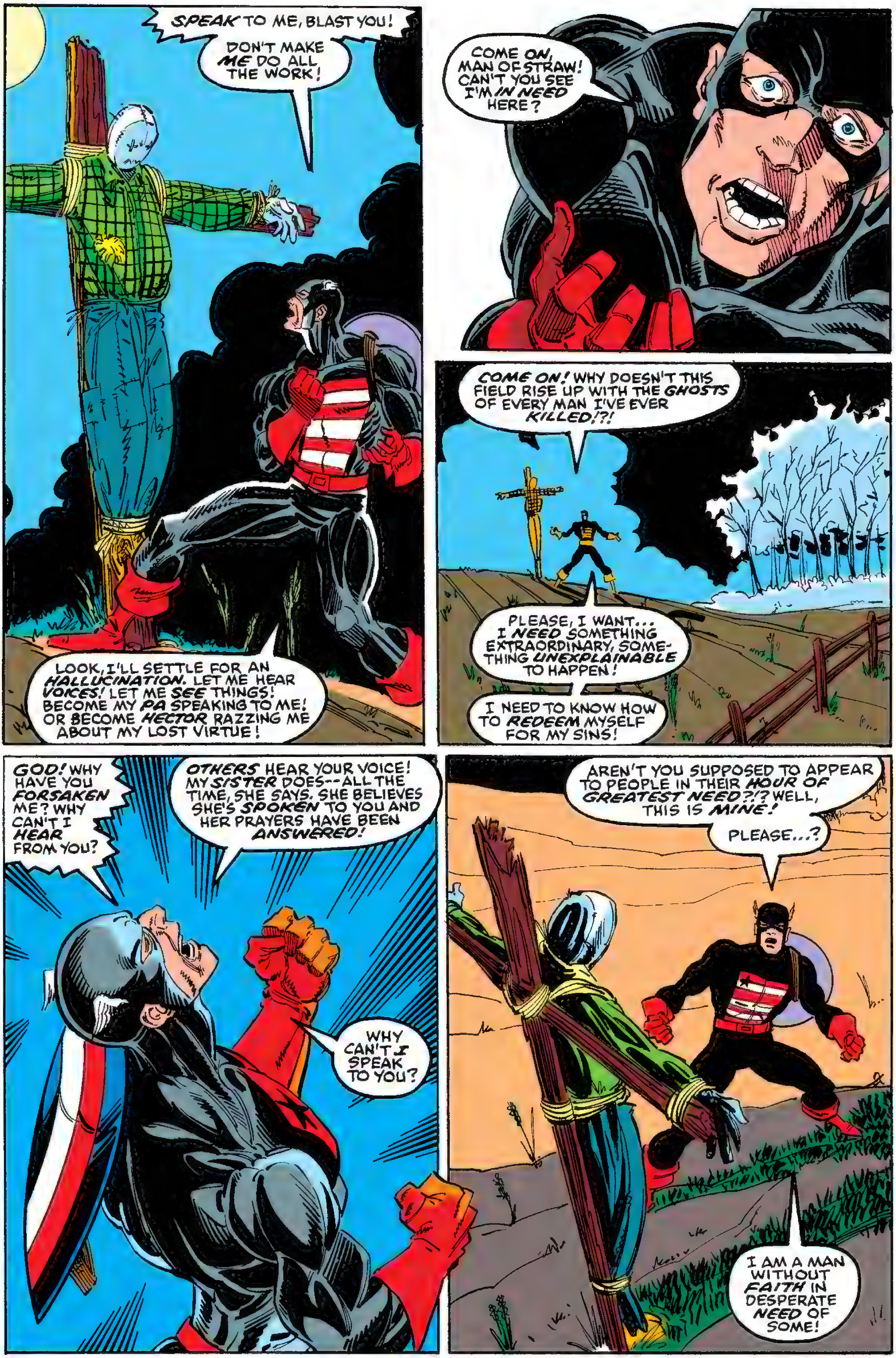

WHEN WE WENT AT IT AT THAT TEXAS OIL FIELD, I REALLY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO WITH YOU ONCE I BEAT YOU.
I DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO KILL YOU. I JUST WANTED TO PUT YOU IN A WORLD OF PAIN LIKE THE ONE I WAS LIVING IN.
I IMPROVISED WITH WHAT WAS AT HAND.
I LEFT YOU HANGING THERE FROM AN OIL DRUM, THE LIT TORCH JUST OUT OF REACH.
AND WHEN YOU DUNCES FAILED TO BREAK FREE IN TIME AND IT BLEW UP LIKE A BLAST FROM BELOW, GOD HELP ME --I REMEMBER SMILING.
BUT IF I'D REALLY WANTED YOU DEAD, WOULD I HAVE RISKED MY LIFE WALTZING INTO THAT INFERNO TO HAUL YOUR BUTTS OUT OF THE BLAZE?
NO WAY. DEAD YOUR PAIN WOULD BE OVER. ALIVE YOU MIGHT KNOW AGONY LIKE THAT OF SEEING SOMEONE YOU LOVE MASSACRED IN YOUR MIND'S EYE HUNDREDS OF TIMES A DAY.
THAT'S WHAT I WANTED. REALLY.
I LOST TRACK OF YOU AFTER THAT. I WAS BUSY. WENT UNDERCOVER. GOT A NEW IDENTITY.
NEXT THING I KNOW YOU AND JERRY POP UP AS ONE OF IMMORTUS'S LEGION OF THE UNLIVING.
WHAT'S THE STORY HERE? I SAY TO MYSELF. YOU AIN'T DEAD. DOUBT IT'S REALLY YOU TWO GUYS AT ALL.
IMMORTUS IS SOME WACKED-OUT WIZARD. WOULDN'T PUT IT PAST HIM TO MAGICALLY MAKE A COUPLE STIFFS LOOK LIKE YOU TWO.
AND WHEN THE DOPEY DOPPELGANGERS IMPALE EACH OTHER, I CRACK A JOKE. WHY NOT? IT'S NOT REALLY YOU.
STILL, I MAKE A MENTAL NOTE TO--
AHA, THE MOMENT OF TRUTH.
NOW LET'S SEE WHO THEY GOT BURIED BENEATH YOUR HEADSTONE, HEC...
NO.

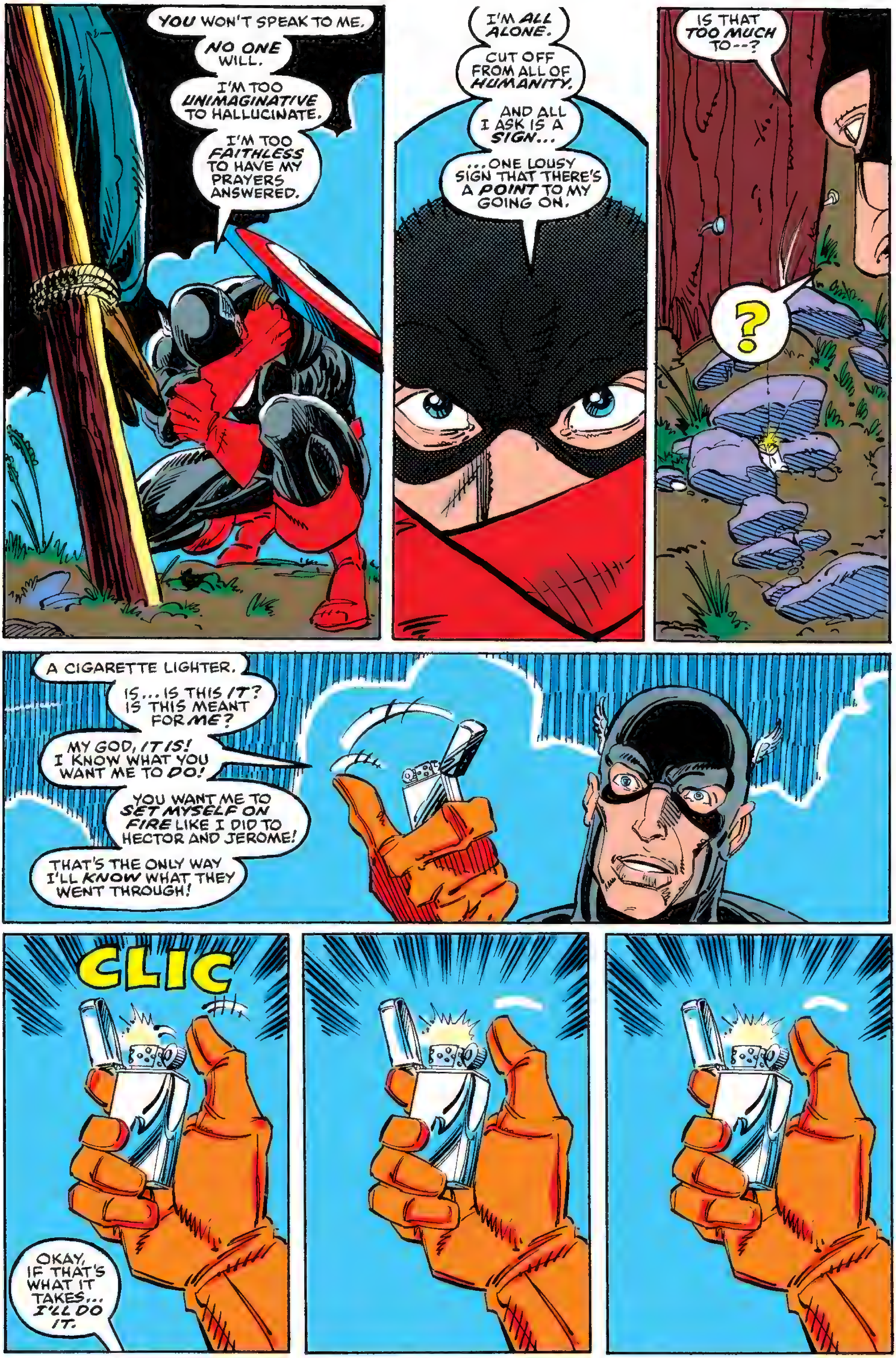

IT...IT *LOOKS* LIKE YOU, HECTOR. OR WHAT YOU MIGHT LOOK LIKE WITH WICKED *BURN SCARS* ON YOUR FACE AND YOU'D BEEN *DEAD* A WEEK.
THIS IS A *JOKE*, RIGHT? SOME VERY ELABORATE PRACTICAL JOKE. COME *ON*, HEC. TELL ME...
THIS... THIS...
THIS
IS
NO
JOKE
THIS IS A *REAL CORPSE* I'M HOLDING HERE.
CAN WHAT I WAS TOLD BE *TRUE*? IS THIS REALLY ...*YOU*?
LET ME *THINK*! AFTER THE UNLIVING LEGION AFFAIR WAS SETTLED, I WENT BACK TO AVENGERS COMPOUND AND USED THE *DATANET* TO CHECK UP ON YOU GUYS.
IN A COUPLE OF MINUTES, I'D GOTTEN THE NAME OF THE *HOSPITAL* YOU'D BEEN FLOWN TO SINCE THE OIL FIELD INCIDENT.
I ACCESSED THE *PATIENT RECORDS* AND SAT THERE STARING AT YOUR FILES LIKE AN IDIOT.
UNDER YOUR NAMES WAS THE WORD *"DECEASED."* WHAT LOAD OF CRUD WAS THIS?
DECEASED
DECEA
I TOOK A QUINJET AND FLEW OUT HERE TO *ILLINOIS* AND LOOKED UP THE HEAD OF THE BURN WARD, DR. ORATZ. IT WAS SOMETHING I HAD TO DO *IN PERSON*.
I ASKED HIM ABOUT YOU. HE SAID YOU'D *DIED* A WEEK AGO. I DIDN'T BELIEVE HIM. I ASKED HOW.
HE SAID UNLESS I'M FAMILY, HE COULDN'T TELL ME ANYTHING.
I WHIPPED OUT MY AVENGERS ID. IF THAT DIDN'T CONVINCE HIM TO TALK, I FIGURED HOLDING A CLENCHED *FIST* IN FRONT OF HIS FACE WOULD.
HE TOLD ME TO STEP INTO HIS PRIVATE OFFICE. THERE HE TOLD ME YOU TWO GUYS COMMITTED *SUICIDE* SOON AS YOU LEFT HIS ROUND-THE-CLOCK CARE.
I *STILL* THINK HE'S TRYING TO PULL ONE OVER ON ME. IN MY BUSINESS, FAKED DEATHS ARE AN *EVERYDAY OCCURRENCE*.

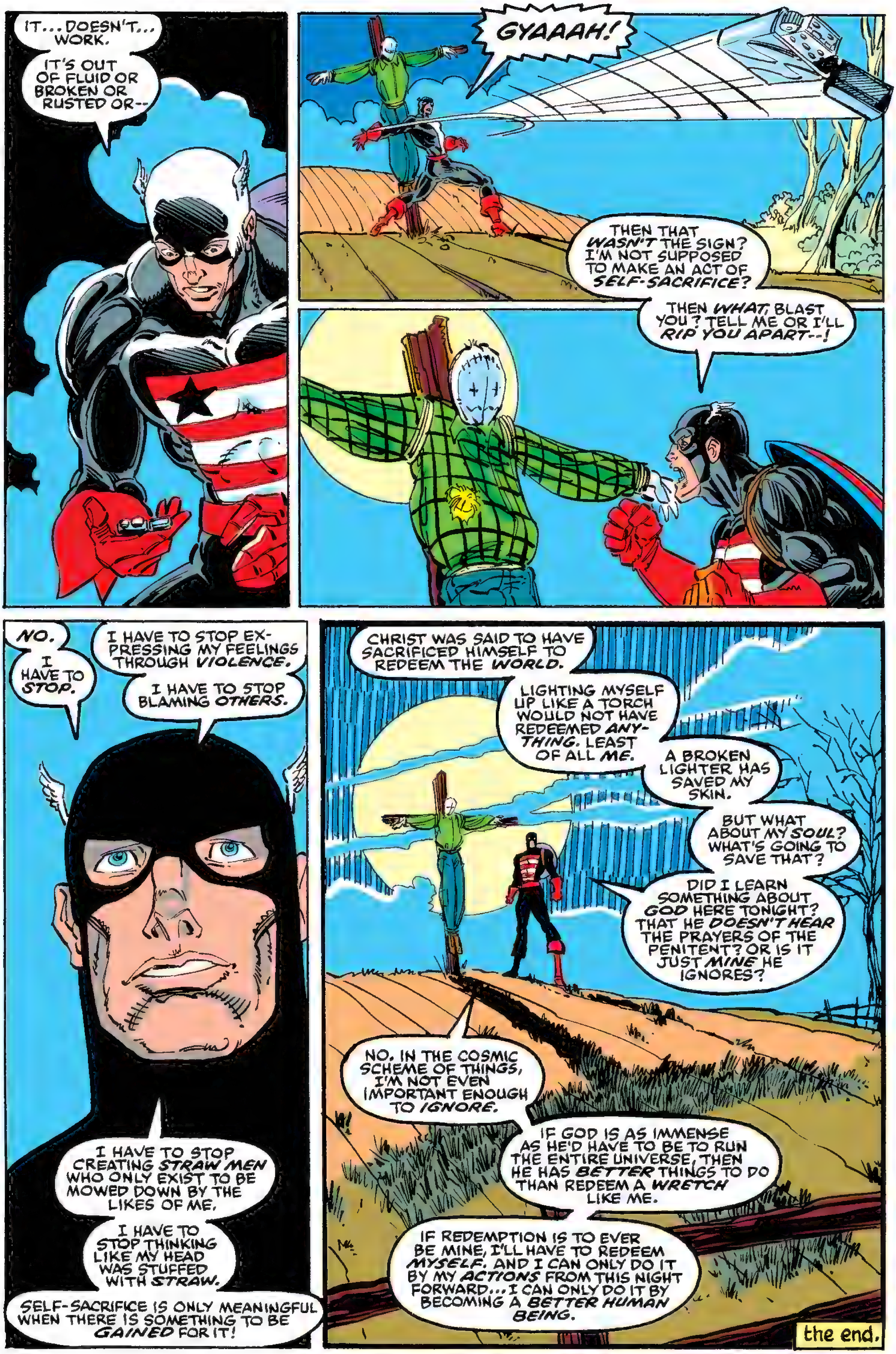

BUT HE'S PLAYING HIS PART SO WELL I DECIDED TO GO ALONG WITH THE GAG, SEE WHAT HE'S GOT TO *SAY*. I REMEMBER EVERY WORD.
...THEY LOST THEIR *EYES, EARS*, AND TWO-THIRDS OF THEIR *SKIN* FOR ITS FULL THICKNESS. THAT INCLUDES *HAIR, EYELIDS*, AND *FINGERNAILS*.
THEY NEVER LOST *CONSCIOUSNESS*.
WHEN THEY GOT HERE THEY WERE *INTUBATED* SO WHEN LARYNGEAL EDEMA MADE THEIR HEADS SWELL UP LIKE *PUMPKINS*, THEY COULD STILL *BREATHE*.
THEY WERE GIVEN *IV LINES* TO PROVIDE NOURISHMENT AND FLUID. WITHOUT SKIN, BODY FLUIDS EVAPORATED RAPIDLY.
LEAKING WOUNDS WERE *CLEANSED* AND *DRESSED*. DEAD AND INFECTED SKIN HAD TO BE *SLICED AWAY*.
THEY WERE IMMERSED DAILY IN WATER TO REMOVE *OINTMENT, DEAD SKIN*, AND *CRUSTS*. THE WATER CAUSED EXCRUCIATING *PAIN* THAT COULD NOT BE ALLEVIATED BY EVEN THE *STRONGEST OPIATES*.
EVENTUALLY *SCAR TISSUE* FORMED, BUT WAS TOO THICK AND CONSTRICTING TO PERMIT NORMAL *MOVEMENT* AT THE *JOINTS*. THE MEN UNDERWENT PAINFUL RECONSTRUCTIVE *SURGERY* TO PREVENT TOTAL IMMOBILIZATION.
BUT IN THE END WHEN MR. LENNOX AND MR. JOHNSON REALIZED THEY WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO *SEE* OR *HEAR* OR *FEEL* AGAIN--
--THAT EVEN *AFTER* PLASTIC SURGERY THEIR APPEARANCES WOULD BE *GROTESQUE*--
--THAT EVEN WITH THEIR *AUGMENTED MUSCULATURES* THEY WOULD REQUIRE *FULL-TIME CARE* FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES--
--THEY DECIDED TO *TAKE* THEIR LIVES.
AND THEIR *STRENGTH* BEING WHAT IT WAS, THERE WAS NOTHING WE COULD DO TO *STOP* THEM.
HIS WORDS... THE PICTURES... *GET* TO ME. I STILL DON'T *BELIEVE* YOU TWO CASHED IN YOUR CHIPS, BUT THE BURN TREATMENT YOU WENT THROUGH--I NEVER HEARD OF ANYTHING SO *HORRIBLE*.
IF YOU'D BEEN THROUGH *THAT*, THEN YOU *DID* KNOW THE WORLD OF PAIN I'D WANTED YOU TO KNOW. IN FACT, YOU KNEW IT *BETTER* THAN I WANTED YOU TO.
THERE IS THE PAIN OF *LOSS, GUILT*, AND *ANGUISH*. AND THERE IS THE PAIN OF... *PAIN*.
HOSPITA
I STRODE OUT OF THERE SHAKEN. IT'S GOTTA BE A *HOAX*.
THE PICTURES OF YOU *FAKED*. THE DOC'S ACCOUNT *EXAGGERATED*. BOTTOM LINE: YOU *WEREN'T* DEAD.


BUT I HAD TO KNOW *FOR SURE.* HAD TO. I COULDN'T ACCEPT *ANYONE'S* WORD FOR THIS.
I HAD TO SEE FOR *MYSELF.*
NOW I *HAVE.*
HECTOR, YOU MISERABLE MOTHERLESS *DUNGHEAP!* WHAT DID YOU GO AND *DO?*
WHAT DID *I* GO AND DO?
WHERE DO I GO, WHAT DO I DO *NOW?*
GOTTA... GOTTA *GET* AWAY. GOTTA RUN. GOTTA THINK. GOTTA... I DON'T *KNOW* WHAT.
EYES. HAD NO EYES.
FLESH. TIGHT, SHINY, SCARRED.
EARS. JUST HOLES.
BLAST YOU, HECTOR. HAD TO HAVE A *CLOSED COFFIN FUNERAL!*
ARRGH! WHAT TO DO WHAT TO DO WHAT TO--
WHEN MY FOLKS DIED, I FELT AS *BAD* AS A HUMAN BEING CAN FEEL.
FEEL THAT WAY *AGAIN!*
HECTOR LENNOX WAS MY *FRIEND.* WE'D SHARED BOOZE, FUN, WOMEN! HOW COULD IT HAVE COME TO *THIS?*
WHEN I TIED YOU TO THAT *OIL DRUM,* I HAD NO IDEA THIS'D COME OF IT. BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW WHEN YOU BLURTED OUT MY REAL NAME, MY FOLKS WOULD *DIE* 'CAUSE OF IT EITHER.
I'M *SORRY,* HEC! I WAS *CRAZY* AFTER MY FOLKS WERE MASSACRED. RIPPING APART THE GUYS WHO SHOT 'EM WASN'T *ENOUGH!* I STILL HAD THE NEED TO... TO *BLAME* SOMEONE...
...TO TAKE MORE *ACTION* THOUGH I KNEW IT WOULDN'T *CHANGE* WHAT HAD HAPPENED ONE BIT.
I'VE TAKEN LIVES BEFORE. IN SERVICE TO MY COUNTRY I'M SOMETIMES CALLED UPON TO TAKE *EXTRA MEASURES.* BUT WHAT I DID TO YOU...
...TO *TWO FRIENDS,* FOR GOD'S SAKE, THAT WENT *BEYOND* RETRIBUTION! THE SUFFERING YOU WENT THROUGH WAS *WAY OUT OF PROPORTION* TO WHAT YOU DID.
YOU DIDN'T KILL MY PARENTS, BUT I HELD YOU *RESPONSIBLE.* AND NOW... *I* DIDN'T KILL YOU BUT I HOLD *MYSELF* RESPONSIBLE!


I NEED TO *TALK* TO SOMEBODY OR I'LL GO *CRAZY* AGAIN. DIDN'T TALK TO *ANYONE* ABOUT MY FOLKS' DEATH. CAN'T HANDLE *THIS* ALONE.
CAN'T CALL MY *SISTER*. SHE THINKS I'M *DEAD* AND HAS MADE PEACE WITH THAT.
LEMAR? HE'S A GOOD MAN.
BUT WE NEVER SPOKE OF SPIRITUAL THINGS IN ALL THE YEARS I'VE KNOWN HIM. DON'T KNOW IF HE'D BE *ABLE* TO.
I'VE GOT NO ONE TO TALK TO BUT *YOU*, STRAW MAN. WILL YOU *LET* ME TALK TO YOU? IS TALKING TO YOU BETTER THAN TALKING TO *MYSELF?*
I FEEL...LIKE I HAVE THE NEED TO *ATONE*.
TO DO SOMETHING TO LIGHTEN THE HEAVY BURDEN OF MY *GUILT*.
BUT *WHAT?* WHAT CAN I *DO?*
GIVE UP BEING *USAGENT?*
REVEAL MYSELF TO HEC AND JERRY'S *FAMILIES*-- LET *THEM* DECIDE THE PUNISHMENT FOR ME?
WHAT--?

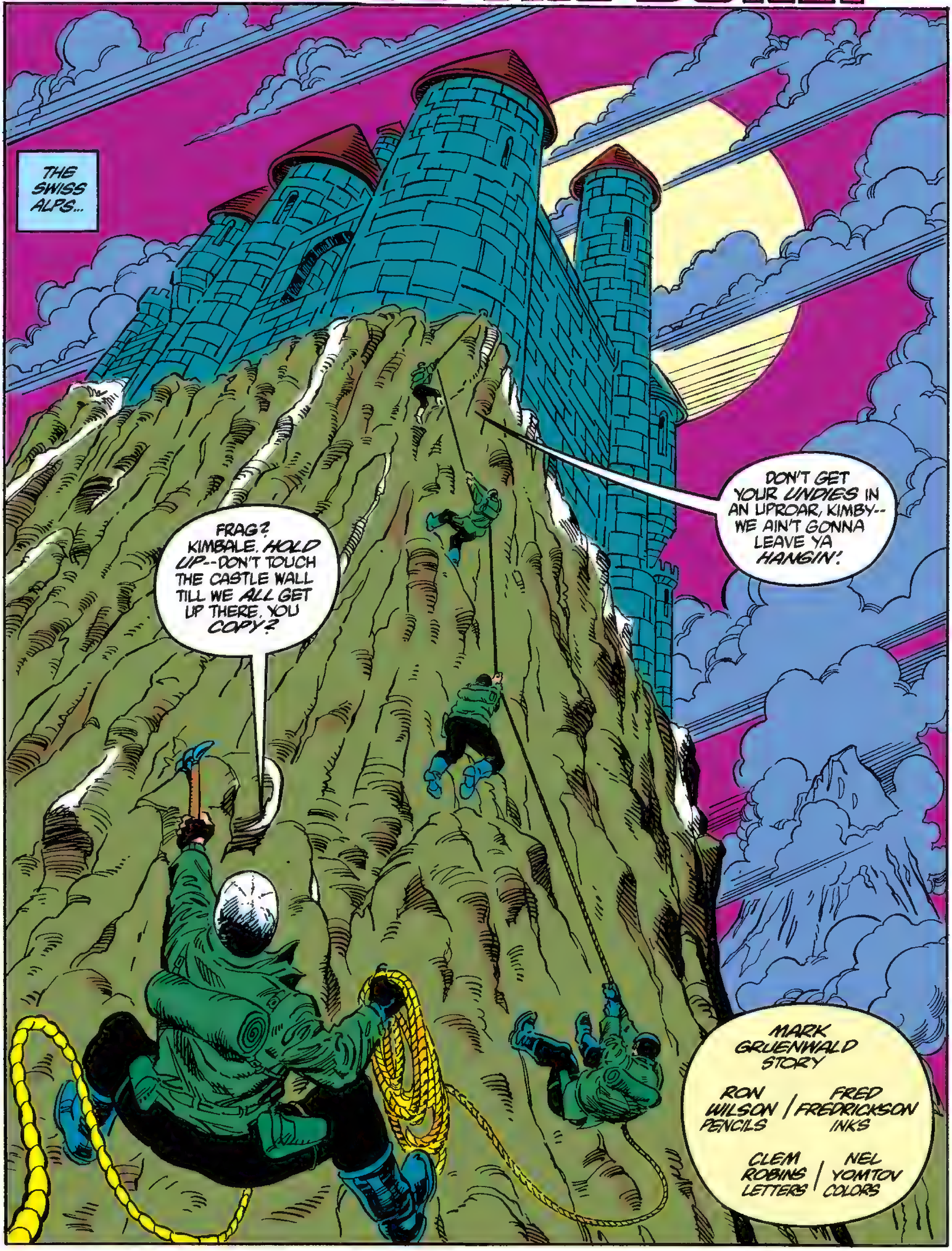

SPEAK TO ME, BLAST YOU!
DON'T MAKE ME DO ALL THE WORK!
LOOK, I'LL SETTLE FOR AN HALLUCINATION. LET ME HEAR VOICES! LET ME SEE THINGS! BECOME MY PA SPEAKING TO ME! OR BECOME HECTOR RAZZING ME ABOUT MY LOST VIRTUE!
COME ON, MAN OF STRAW! CAN'T YOU SEE I'M IN NEED HERE?
COME ON! WHY DOESN'T THIS FIELD RISE UP WITH THE GHOSTS OF EVERY MAN I'VE EVER KILLED!?!
PLEASE, I WANT... I NEED SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY, SOMETHING UNEXPLAINABLE TO HAPPEN!
I NEED TO KNOW HOW TO REDEEM MYSELF FOR MY SINS!
GOD! WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME? WHY CAN'T I HEAR FROM YOU?
OTHERS HEAR YOUR VOICE! MY SISTER DOES--ALL THE TIME, SHE SAYS. SHE BELIEVES SHE'S SPOKEN TO YOU AND HER PRAYERS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED!
WHY CAN'T I SPEAK TO YOU?
AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO APPEAR TO PEOPLE IN THEIR HOUR OF GREATEST NEED?!? WELL, THIS IS MINE!
PLEASE...?
I AM A MAN WITHOUT FAITH IN DESPERATE NEED OF SOME!

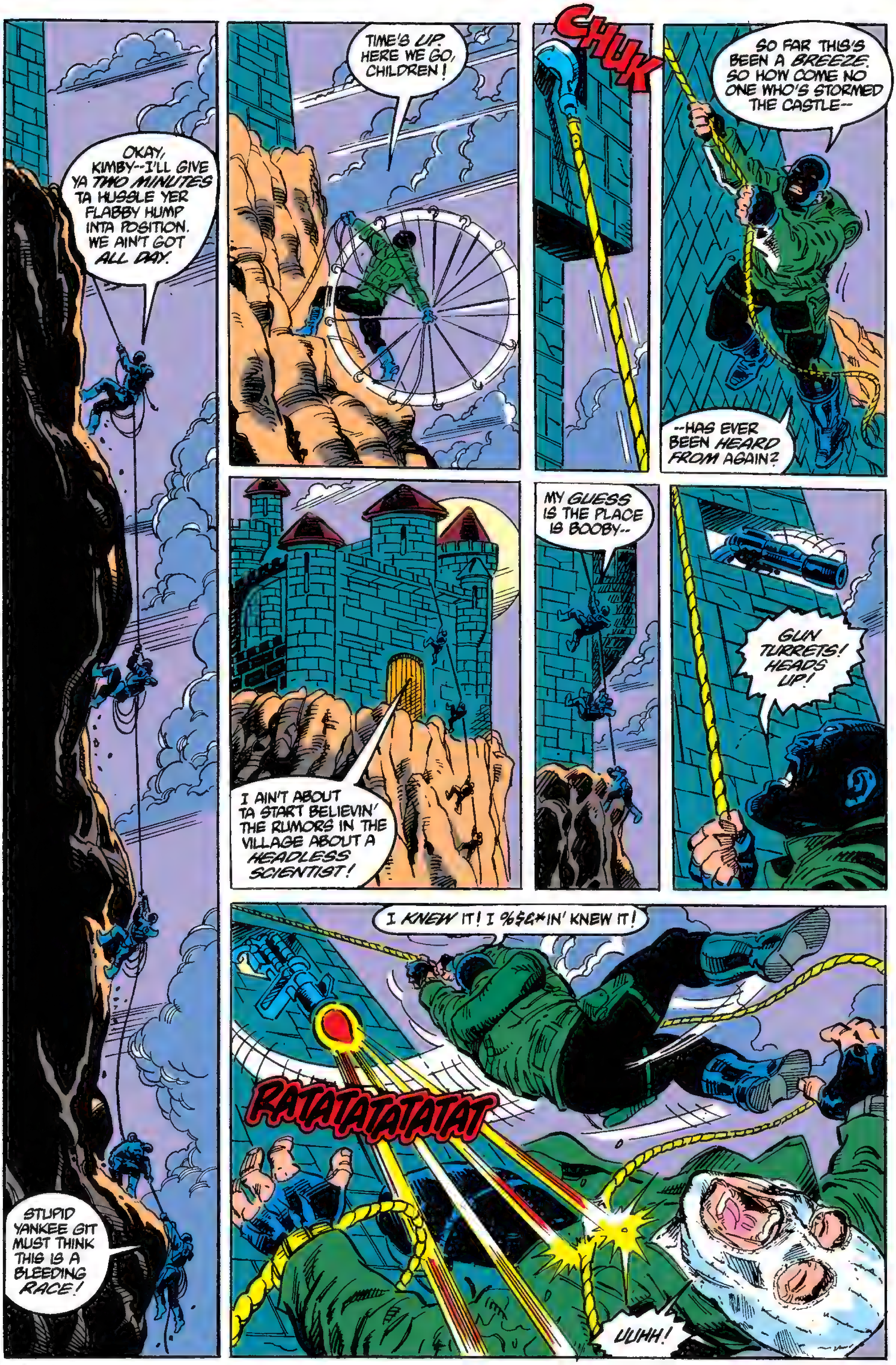

YOU WON'T SPEAK TO ME.
NO ONE WILL.
I'M TOO UNIMAGINATIVE TO HALLUCINATE.
I'M TOO FAITHLESS TO HAVE MY PRAYERS ANSWERED.
I'M ALL ALONE.
CUT OFF FROM ALL OF HUMANITY.
AND ALL I ASK IS A SIGN...
...ONE LOUSY SIGN THAT THERE'S A POINT TO MY GOING ON.
IS THAT TOO MUCH TO--?
?
A CIGARETTE LIGHTER.
IS... IS THIS IT? IS THIS MEANT FOR ME?
MY GOD, IT IS! I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT ME TO DO!
YOU WANT ME TO SET MYSELF ON FIRE LIKE I DID TO HECTOR AND JEROME!
THAT'S THE ONLY WAY I'LL KNOW WHAT THEY WENT THROUGH!
CLIC
OKAY. IF THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES... I'LL DO IT.

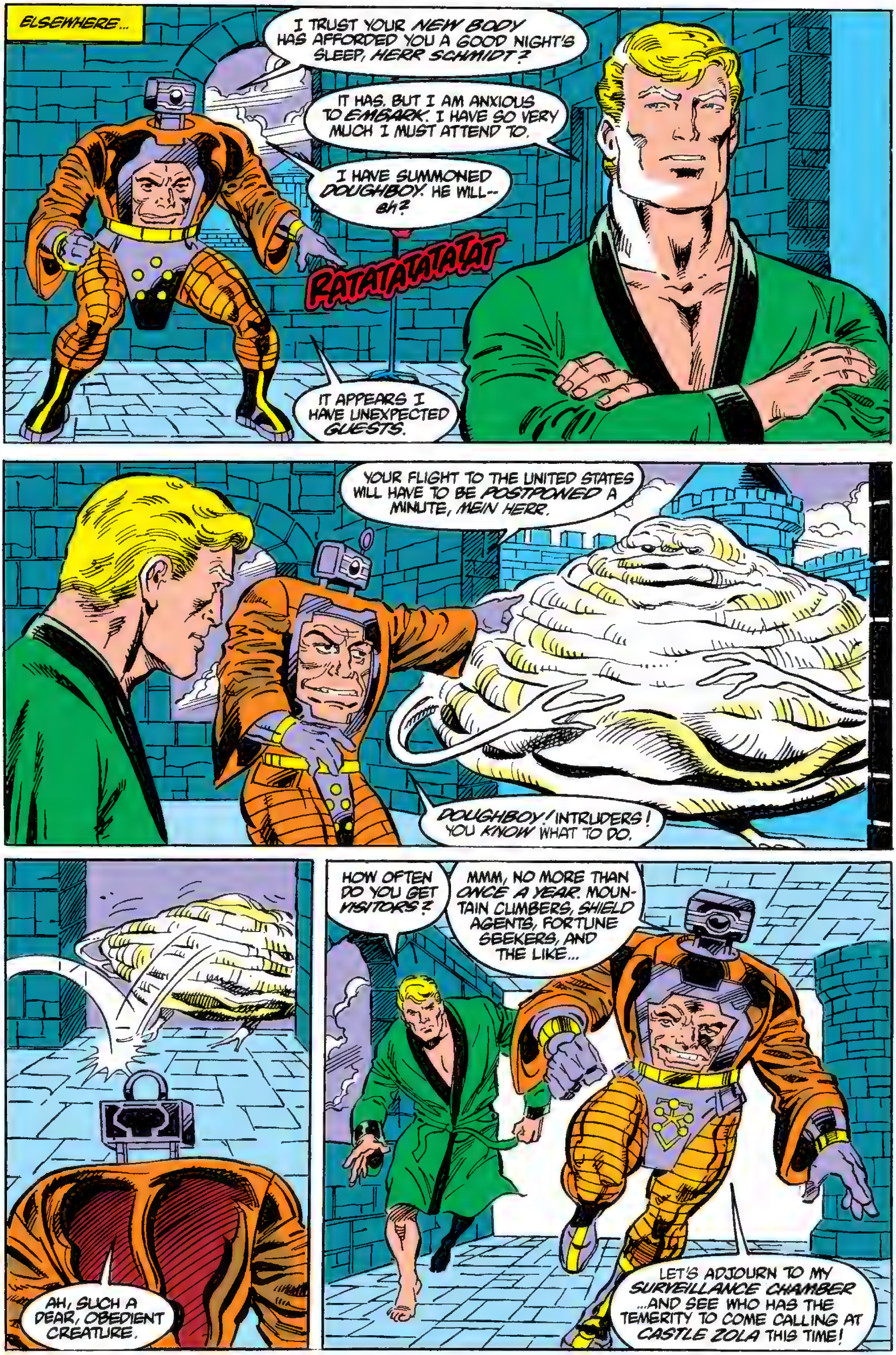

IT... DOESN'T... WORK.
IT'S OUT OF FLUID OR BROKEN OR RUSTED OR--
GYAAAH!
THEN THAT *WASN'T* THE SIGN? I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO MAKE AN ACT OF *SELF-SACRIFICE?*
THEN *WHAT*, BLAST YOU? TELL ME OR I'LL *RIP YOU APART--!*
NO.
I HAVE TO *STOP.*
I HAVE TO STOP EXPRESSING MY FEELINGS THROUGH *VIOLENCE.*
I HAVE TO STOP BLAMING *OTHERS.*
I HAVE TO STOP CREATING *STRAW MEN* WHO ONLY EXIST TO BE MOWED DOWN BY THE LIKES OF ME.
I HAVE TO STOP THINKING LIKE MY HEAD WAS STUFFED WITH *STRAW.*
SELF-SACRIFICE IS ONLY MEANINGFUL WHEN THERE IS SOMETHING TO BE *GAINED* FOR IT!
CHRIST WAS SAID TO HAVE SACRIFICED HIMSELF TO REDEEM THE *WORLD.*
LIGHTING MYSELF UP LIKE A TORCH WOULD NOT HAVE REDEEMED *ANYTHING.* LEAST OF ALL *ME.*
A BROKEN LIGHTER HAS SAVED MY SKIN.
BUT WHAT ABOUT MY *SOUL?* WHAT'S GOING TO SAVE THAT?
DID I LEARN SOMETHING ABOUT *GOD* HERE TONIGHT? THAT HE *DOESN'T HEAR* THE PRAYERS OF THE PENITENT? OR IS IT JUST *MINE* HE IGNORES?
NO. IN THE COSMIC SCHEME OF THINGS, I'M NOT EVEN IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO *IGNORE.*
IF GOD IS AS IMMENSE AS HE'D HAVE TO BE TO RUN THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE, THEN HE HAS *BETTER* THINGS TO DO THAN REDEEM A *WRETCH* LIKE ME.
IF REDEMPTION IS TO EVER BE MINE, I'LL HAVE TO REDEEM *MYSELF.* AND I CAN ONLY DO IT BY MY *ACTIONS* FROM THIS NIGHT FORWARD... I CAN ONLY DO IT BY BECOMING A *BETTER HUMAN BEING.*
the end.

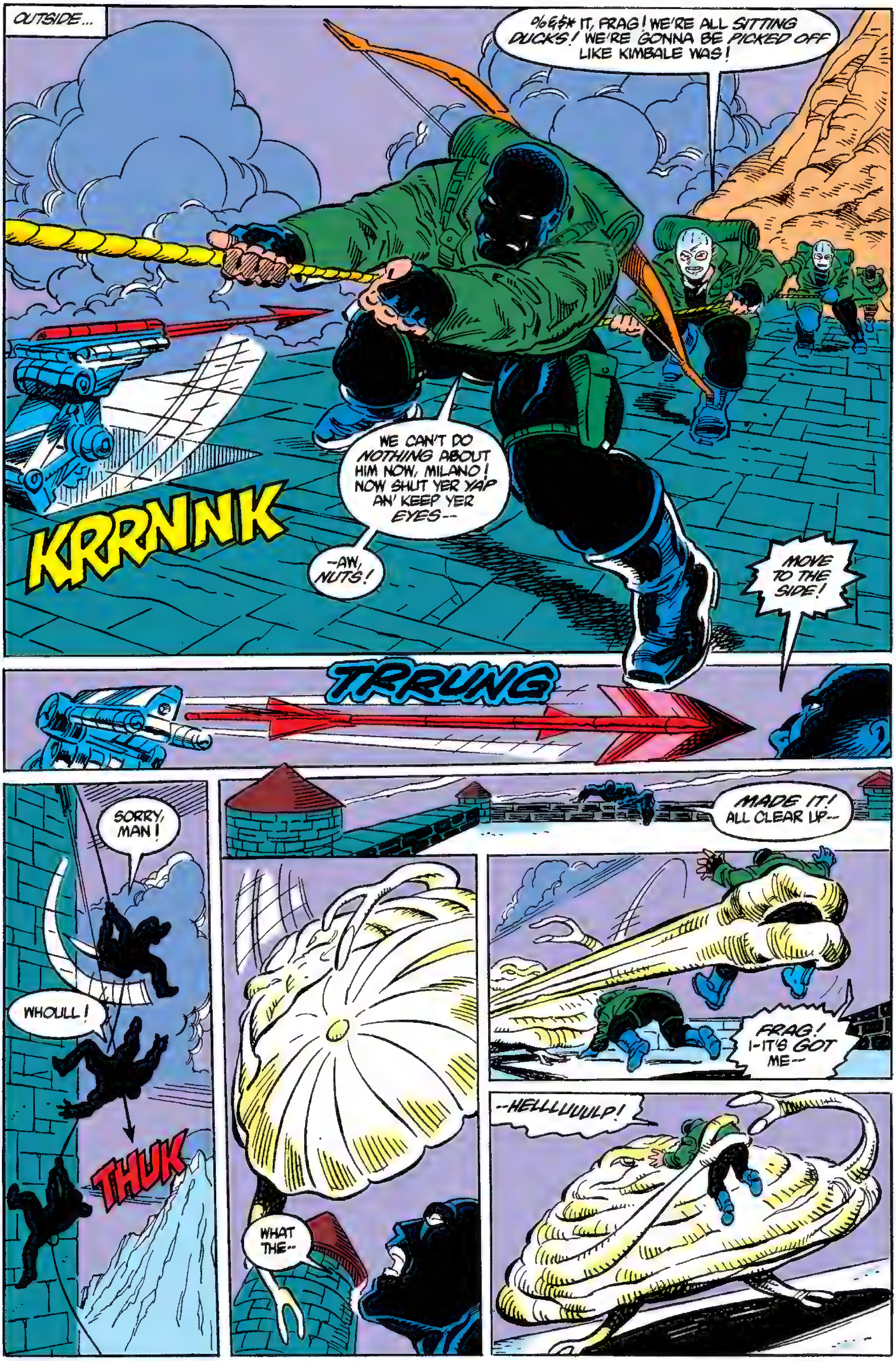
Stan Lee PRESENTS:

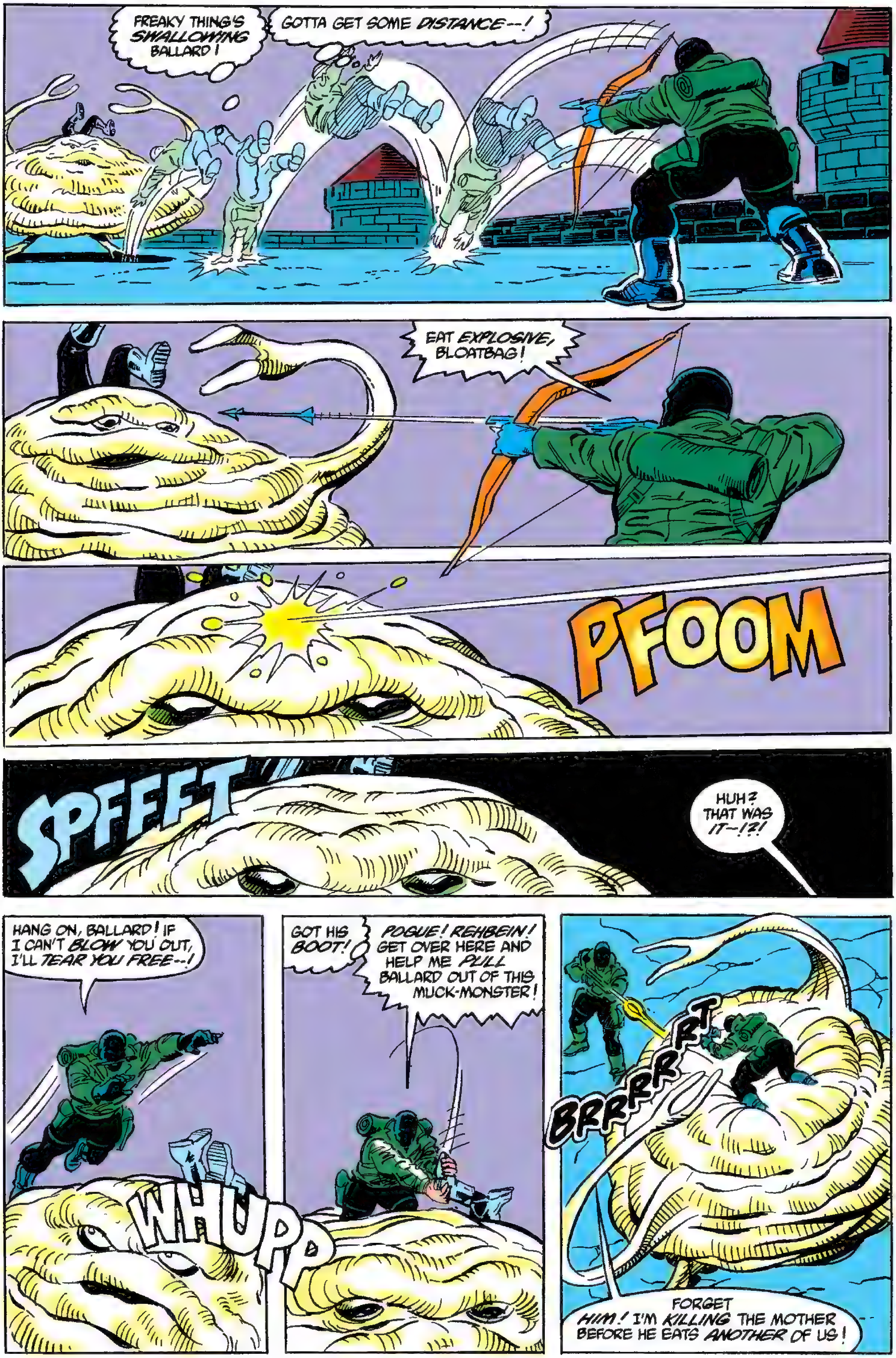
THE RED SKULL! BAD TO THE BONE!

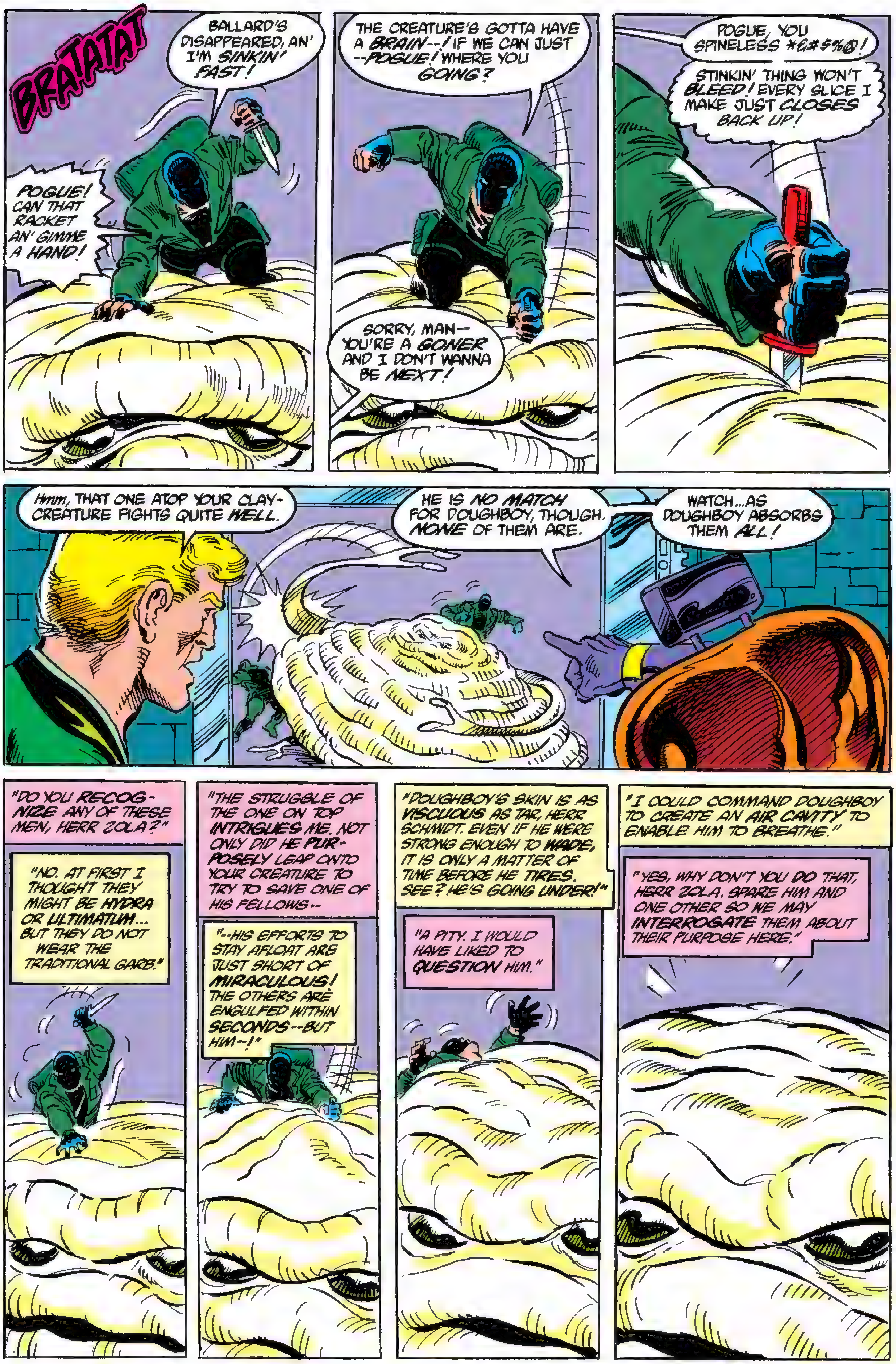

THE SWISS ALPS...
DON'T GET YOUR *UNDIES* IN AN UPROAR, KIMBY-- WE AIN'T GONNA LEAVE YA *HANGIN'!*
FRAG? KIMBALE. *HOLD UP*--DON'T TOUCH THE CASTLE WALL TILL WE *ALL* GET UP THERE. YOU COPY?
MARK GRUENWALD STORY
RON WILSON PENCILS / FRED FREDRICKSON INKS
CLEM ROBINS LETTERS / NEL YOMTOV COLORS

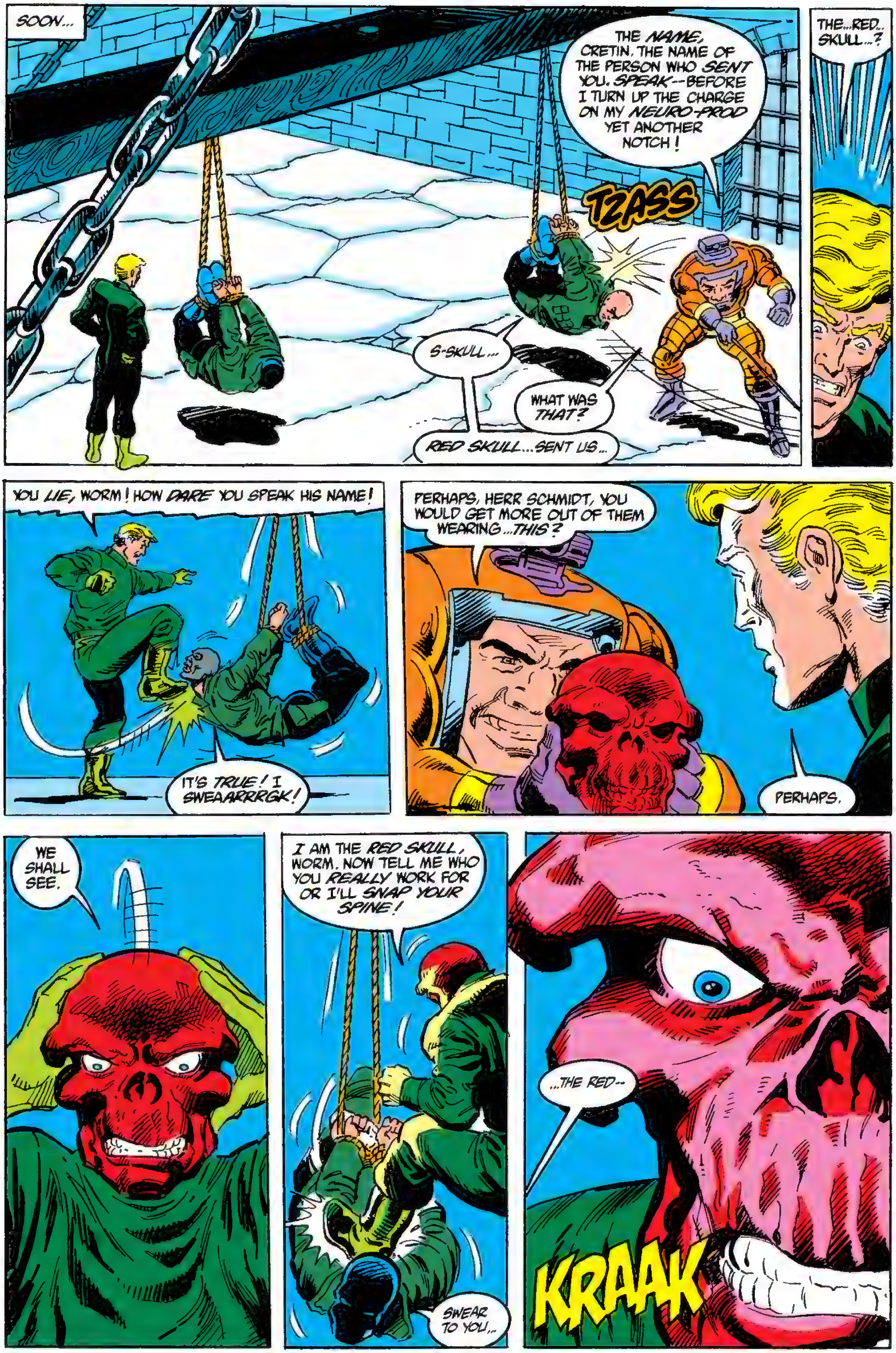

OKAY, KIMBY--I'LL GIVE YA *TWO MINUTES* TA HUSSLE YER FLABBY HUMP INTA POSITION. WE AIN'T GOT *ALL DAY.*
STUPID YANKEE GIT MUST THINK THIS IS A BLEEDING *RACE!*
TIME'S *UP.* HERE WE GO, CHILDREN!
CHUK
SO FAR THIS'S BEEN A *BREEZE.* SO HOW COME NO ONE WHO'S STORMED THE CASTLE--
--HAS EVER BEEN *HEARD* FROM AGAIN?
I AIN'T ABOUT TA START BELIEVIN' THE RUMORS IN THE VILLAGE ABOUT A *HEADLESS SCIENTIST!*
MY *GUESS* IS THE PLACE IS BOOBY--
GUN TURRETS! HEADS UP!
I *KNEW* IT! I %$&*IN' KNEW IT!
RATATATATATATAT
UUHH!

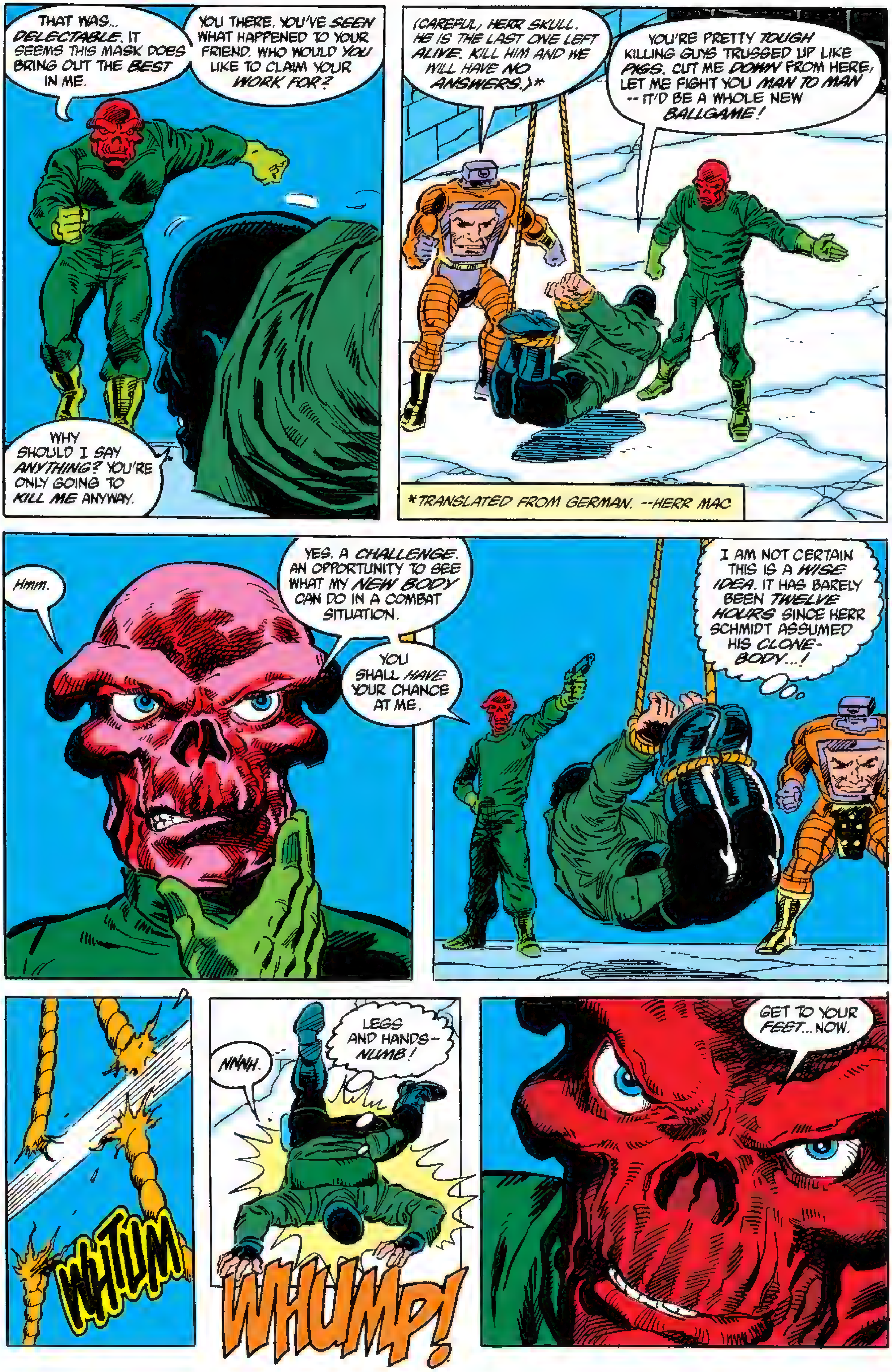

ELSEWHERE...
I TRUST YOUR NEW BODY HAS AFFORDED YOU A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP, HERR SCHMIDT?
IT HAS. BUT I AM ANXIOUS TO EMBARK. I HAVE SO VERY MUCH I MUST ATTEND TO.
I HAVE SUMMONED DOUGHBOY. HE WILL-- eh?
RATATATATATAT
IT APPEARS I HAVE UNEXPECTED GUESTS.
YOUR FLIGHT TO THE UNITED STATES WILL HAVE TO BE POSTPONED A MINUTE, MEIN HERR.
DOUGHBOY! INTRUDERS! YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.
AH, SUCH A DEAR, OBEDIENT CREATURE.
HOW OFTEN DO YOU GET VISITORS?
MMM, NO MORE THAN ONCE A YEAR. MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS, SHIELD AGENTS, FORTUNE SEEKERS, AND THE LIKE...
LET'S ADJOURN TO MY SURVEILLANCE CHAMBER ...AND SEE WHO HAS THE TEMERITY TO COME CALLING AT CASTLE ZOLA THIS TIME!

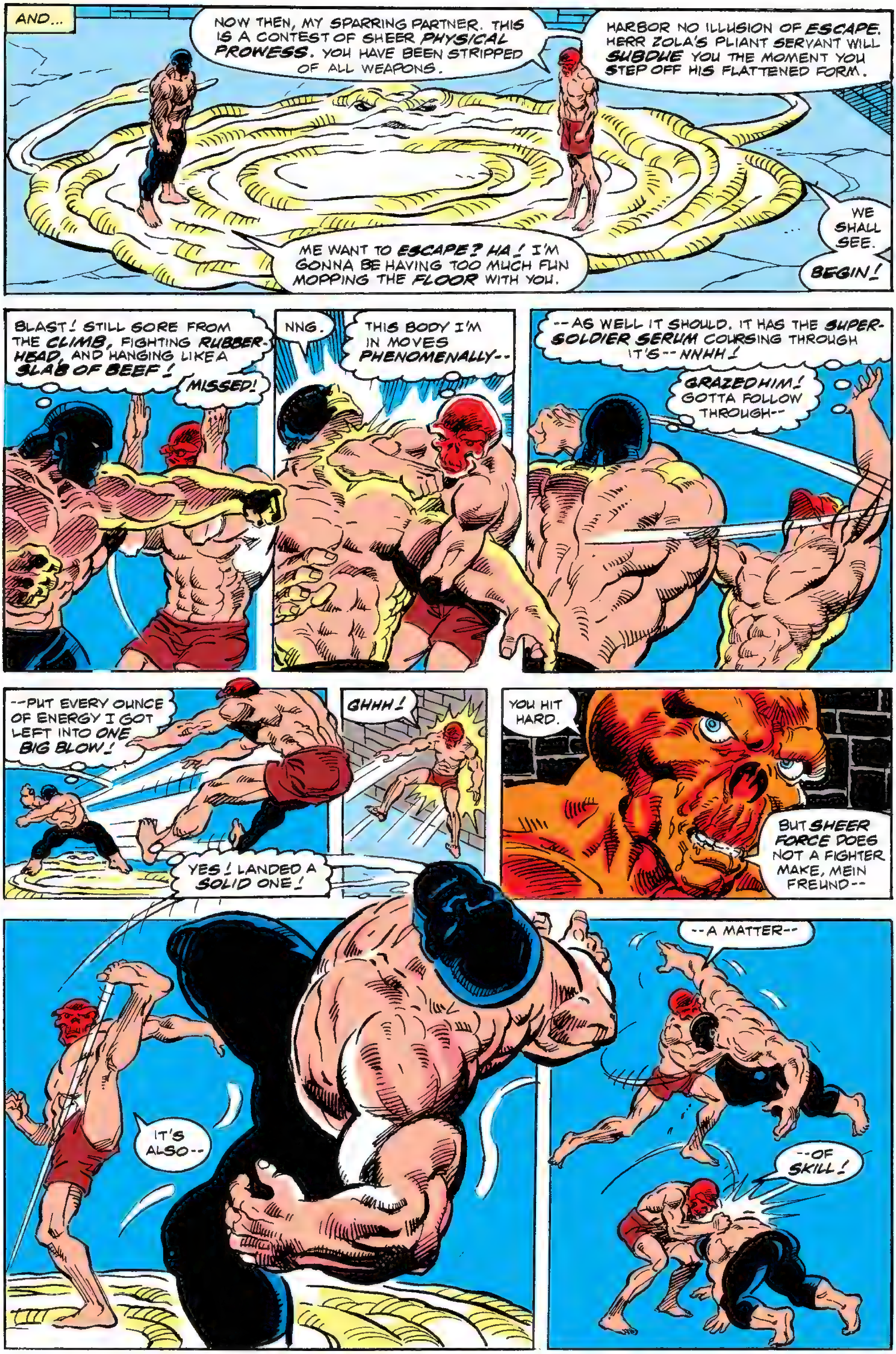

OUTSIDE...
%&$* IT, FRAG! WE'RE ALL SITTING DUCKS! WE'RE GONNA BE PICKED OFF LIKE KIMBALE WAS!
WE CAN'T DO NOTHING ABOUT HIM NOW, MILANO! NOW SHUT YER YAP AN' KEEP YER EYES--
--AW, NUTS!
KRRNNK
MOVE TO THE SIDE!
TRRUNG
SORRY, MAN!
WHOULL!
THUK
MADE IT! ALL CLEAR UP--
WHAT THE--
FRAG! I-IT'S GOT ME--
--HELLLUUULP!

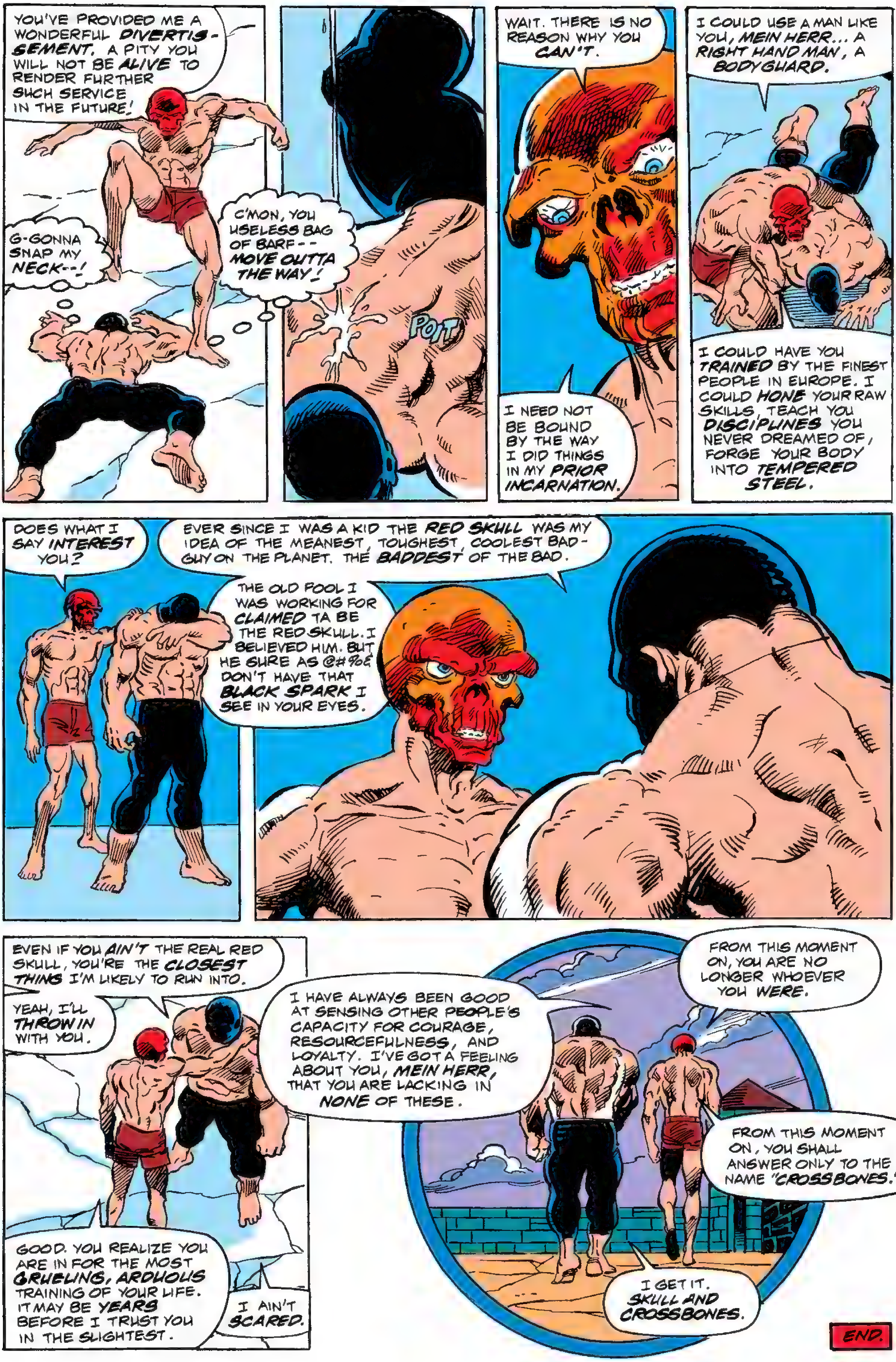

FREAKY THING'S *SWALLOWING* BALLARD!
GOTTA GET SOME *DISTANCE*--!
EAT *EXPLOSIVE*, BLOATBAG!
PFOOM
SPFFFT
HUH? THAT WAS *IT*--!?!
HANG ON, BALLARD! IF I CAN'T *BLOW* YOU OUT, I'LL *TEAR YOU FREE*--!
WHUPP
GOT HIS *BOOT*!
POGUE! REHBEIN! GET OVER HERE AND HELP ME *PULL* BALLARD OUT OF THIS MUCK-MONSTER!
BRRRRRRT
FORGET *HIM!* I'M *KILLING* THE MOTHER BEFORE HE EATS *ANOTHER* OF US!


BRATATAT
BALLARD'S DISAPPEARED, AN' I'M SINKIN' FAST!
POGUE! CAN THAT RACKET AN' GIMME A HAND!
THE CREATURE'S GOTTA HAVE A BRAIN--! IF WE CAN JUST --POGUE! WHERE YOU GOING?
SORRY, MAN-- YOU'RE A GONER AND I DON'T WANNA BE NEXT!
POGUE, YOU SPINELESS *&#$%@!
STINKIN' THING WON'T BLEED! EVERY SLICE I MAKE JUST CLOSES BACK UP!
Hmm, THAT ONE ATOP YOUR CLAY-CREATURE FIGHTS QUITE WELL.
HE IS NO MATCH FOR DOUGHBOY, THOUGH. NONE OF THEM ARE.
WATCH...AS DOUGHBOY ABSORBS THEM ALL!
"DO YOU RECOGNIZE ANY OF THESE MEN, HERR ZOLA?"
"NO. AT FIRST I THOUGHT THEY MIGHT BE HYDRA OR ULTIMATUM... BUT THEY DO NOT WEAR THE TRADITIONAL GARB."
"THE STRUGGLE OF THE ONE ON TOP INTRIGUES ME. NOT ONLY DID HE PURPOSELY LEAP ONTO YOUR CREATURE TO TRY TO SAVE ONE OF HIS FELLOWS--
"--HIS EFFORTS TO STAY AFLOAT ARE JUST SHORT OF MIRACULOUS! THE OTHERS ARE ENGULFED WITHIN SECONDS--BUT HIM--!"
"DOUGHBOY'S SKIN IS AS VISCUOUS AS TAR, HERR SCHMIDT. EVEN IF HE WERE STRONG ENOUGH TO WADE, IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HE TIRES. SEE? HE'S GOING UNDER!"
"A PITY. I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO QUESTION HIM."
"I COULD COMMAND DOUGHBOY TO CREATE AN AIR CAVITY TO ENABLE HIM TO BREATHE."
"YES, WHY DON'T YOU DO THAT, HERR ZOLA. SPARE HIM AND ONE OTHER SO WE MAY INTERROGATE THEM ABOUT THEIR PURPOSE HERE."


SOON...
THE NAME, CRETIN. THE NAME OF THE PERSON WHO SENT YOU. SPEAK--BEFORE I TURN UP THE CHARGE ON MY NEURO-PROD YET ANOTHER NOTCH!
TZASS
S-SKULL...
WHAT WAS THAT?
RED SKULL...SENT US...
THE...RED... SKULL...?
YOU LIE, WORM! HOW DARE YOU SPEAK HIS NAME!
IT'S TRUE! I SWEAARRRGK!
PERHAPS, HERR SCHMIDT, YOU WOULD GET MORE OUT OF THEM WEARING...THIS?
PERHAPS.
WE SHALL SEE.
I AM THE RED SKULL, WORM. NOW TELL ME WHO YOU REALLY WORK FOR OR I'LL SNAP YOUR SPINE!
SWEAR TO YOU...
...THE RED--
KRAAK


THAT WAS... *DELECTABLE*. IT SEEMS THIS MASK DOES BRING OUT THE *BEST* IN ME.
YOU THERE. YOU'VE *SEEN* WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FRIEND. WHO WOULD *YOU* LIKE TO CLAIM YOUR *WORK FOR?*
WHY SHOULD I SAY *ANYTHING?* YOU'RE ONLY GOING TO *KILL ME* ANYWAY.
(*CAREFUL, HERR SKULL. HE IS THE LAST ONE LEFT ALIVE. KILL HIM AND WE WILL HAVE NO ANSWERS.*)*
YOU'RE PRETTY *TOUGH* KILLING GUYS TRUSSED UP LIKE *PIGS*. CUT ME *DOWN* FROM HERE, LET ME FIGHT YOU *MAN TO MAN* -- IT'D BE A WHOLE NEW *BALLGAME!*
*TRANSLATED FROM GERMAN. --HERR MAC
Hmm.
YES. A *CHALLENGE*. AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE WHAT MY *NEW BODY* CAN DO IN A COMBAT SITUATION.
YOU SHALL *HAVE* YOUR CHANCE AT ME.
I AM NOT CERTAIN THIS IS A *WISE IDEA*. IT HAS BARELY BEEN *TWELVE HOURS* SINCE HERR SCHMIDT ASSUMED HIS *CLONE-BODY*...!
WHTUM
NNNH.
LEGS AND HANDS-- *NUMB!*
WHUMP!
GET TO YOUR *FEET*...NOW.


AND...
NOW THEN, MY SPARRING PARTNER. THIS IS A CONTEST OF SHEER PHYSICAL PROWESS. YOU HAVE BEEN STRIPPED OF ALL WEAPONS.
HARBOR NO ILLUSION OF ESCAPE. HERR ZOLA'S PLIANT SERVANT WILL SUBDUE YOU THE MOMENT YOU STEP OFF HIS FLATTENED FORM.
ME WANT TO ESCAPE? HA! I'M GONNA BE HAVING TOO MUCH FUN MOPPING THE FLOOR WITH YOU.
... WE SHALL SEE.
BEGIN!
BLAST! STILL SORE FROM THE CLIMB, FIGHTING RUBBER-HEAD, AND HANGING LIKE A SLAB OF BEEF!
MISSED!
NNG.
THIS BODY I'M IN MOVES PHENOMENALLY--
--AS WELL IT SHOULD. IT HAS THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM COURSING THROUGH IT'S--NNHH!
GRAZED HIM! GOTTA FOLLOW THROUGH--
--PUT EVERY OUNCE OF ENERGY I GOT LEFT INTO ONE BIG BLOW!
YES! LANDED A SOLID ONE!
GHHH!
YOU HIT HARD.
BUT SHEER FORCE DOES NOT A FIGHTER MAKE, MEIN FREUND--
IT'S ALSO--
--A MATTER--
--OF SKILL!


YOU'VE PROVIDED ME A WONDERFUL DIVERTISSEMENT. A PITY YOU WILL NOT BE ALIVE TO RENDER FURTHER SUCH SERVICE IN THE FUTURE!
G-GONNA SNAP MY NECK--!
C'MON, YOU USELESS BAG OF BARF-- MOVE OUTTA THE WAY!
POIT
WAIT. THERE IS NO REASON WHY YOU CAN'T.
I NEED NOT BE BOUND BY THE WAY I DID THINGS IN MY PRIOR INCARNATION.
I COULD USE A MAN LIKE YOU, MEIN HERR... A RIGHT HAND MAN, A BODYGUARD.
I COULD HAVE YOU TRAINED BY THE FINEST PEOPLE IN EUROPE. I COULD HONE YOUR RAW SKILLS, TEACH YOU DISCIPLINES YOU NEVER DREAMED OF, FORGE YOUR BODY INTO TEMPERED STEEL.
DOES WHAT I SAY INTEREST YOU?
EVER SINCE I WAS A KID THE RED SKULL WAS MY IDEA OF THE MEANEST, TOUGHEST, COOLEST BAD-GUY ON THE PLANET. THE BADDEST OF THE BAD.
THE OLD FOOL I WAS WORKING FOR CLAIMED TA BE THE RED SKULL. I BELIEVED HIM. BUT HE SURE AS @#%£ DON'T HAVE THAT BLACK SPARK I SEE IN YOUR EYES.
EVEN IF YOU AIN'T THE REAL RED SKULL, YOU'RE THE CLOSEST THING I'M LIKELY TO RUN INTO.
YEAH, I'LL THROW IN WITH YOU.
GOOD. YOU REALIZE YOU ARE IN FOR THE MOST GRUELING, ARDUOUS TRAINING OF YOUR LIFE. IT MAY BE YEARS BEFORE I TRUST YOU IN THE SLIGHTEST.
I AIN'T SCARED.
I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN GOOD AT SENSING OTHER PEOPLE'S CAPACITY FOR COURAGE, RESOURCEFULNESS, AND LOYALTY. I'VE GOT A FEELING ABOUT YOU, MEIN HERR, THAT YOU ARE LACKING IN NONE OF THESE.
FROM THIS MOMENT ON, YOU ARE NO LONGER WHOEVER YOU WERE.
FROM THIS MOMENT ON, YOU SHALL ANSWER ONLY TO THE NAME "CROSSBONES."
I GET IT. SKULL AND CROSSBONES.
END.

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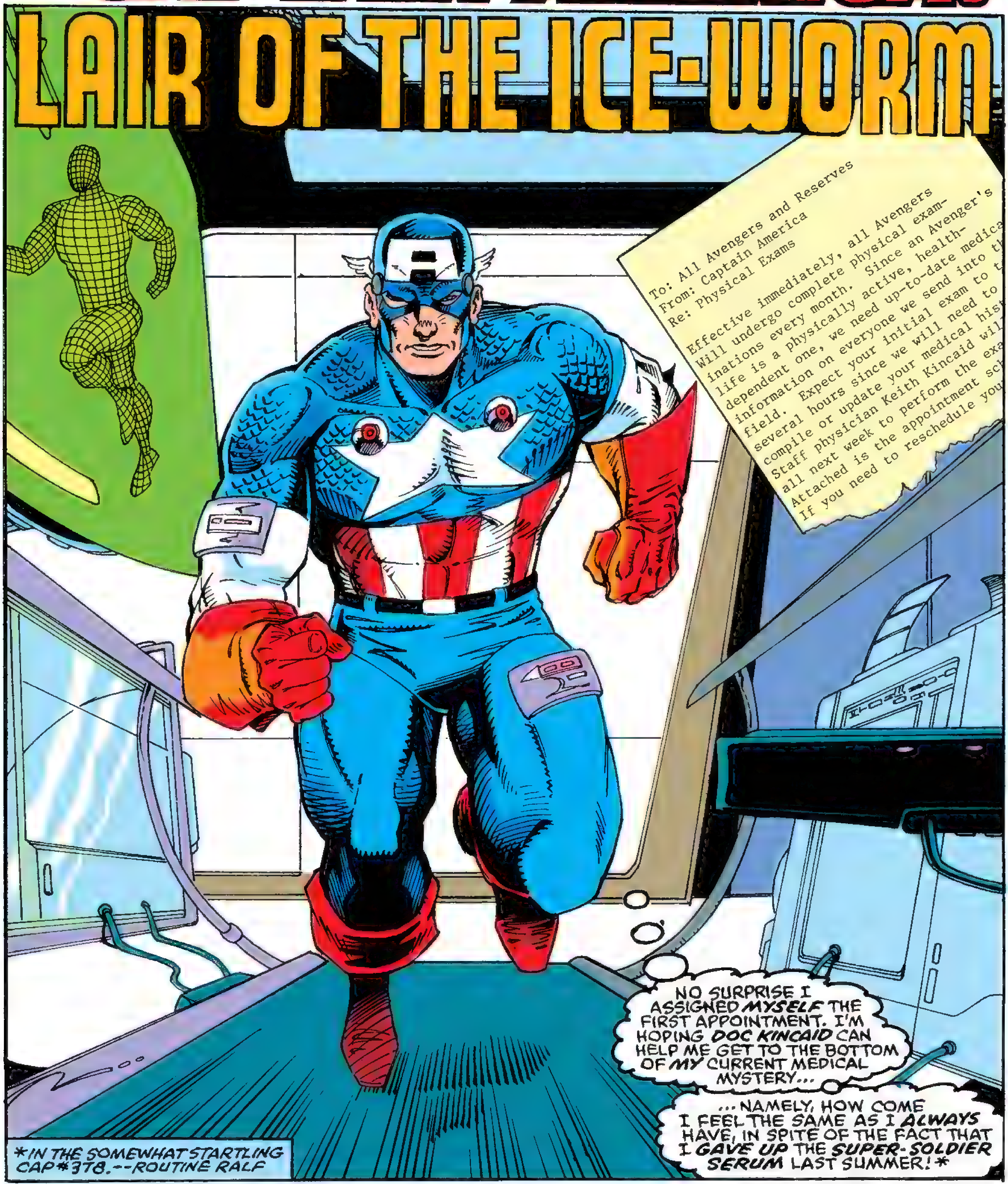
CAPTAIN AMERICA®
GUESS WHO?
RON '90 LIM
DAN BULANADI
ATTACK OF THE ICE WORM!

STEVE ROGERS . . . BORN IN THE U.S.A., RAISED TO CHERISH THE IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY, ENDOWED WITH A SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE, AND DRIVEN TO BE THE MOST CAPABLE COMBATANT IN THE WORLD. NOW AS BOTH LONE CRUSADER AND LEADER OF THE RENOWNED AVENGERS, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM!

Stan Lee PRESENTS:

CAPTAIN AMERICA!

LAIR OF THE ICE-WORM



To: All Avengers and Reserves
From: Captain America
Re: Physical Exams

Effective immediately, all Avengers
will undergo complete physical exam-
inations every month. Since an Avenger's
life is a physically active, health-
dependent one, we need up-to-date medica
information on everyone we send into th
field. Expect your initial exam to t
several hours since we will need to
compile or update your medical hist
Staff physician Keith Kincaid will
all next week to perform the exa
Attached is the appointment sch
If you need to reschedule you

NO SURPRISE I ASSIGNED *MYSELF* THE FIRST APPOINTMENT. I'M HOPING *DOC KINCAID* CAN HELP ME GET TO THE BOTTOM OF *MY* CURRENT MEDICAL MYSTERY...
...NAMELY, HOW COME I FEEL THE SAME AS I *ALWAYS* HAVE, IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT I *GAVE UP* THE *SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM* LAST SUMMER!*
*IN THE SOMEWHAT STARTLING CAP #378.--ROUTINE RALF

MARK GRUENWALD WRITER · RON LIM PENCILER · DANNY BULANADI INKER · JOE ROSEN LETTERER · STEVE BUCCELLATO COLORIST · RALPH MACCHIO EDITOR · TOM DEFALCO ED IN CHIEF

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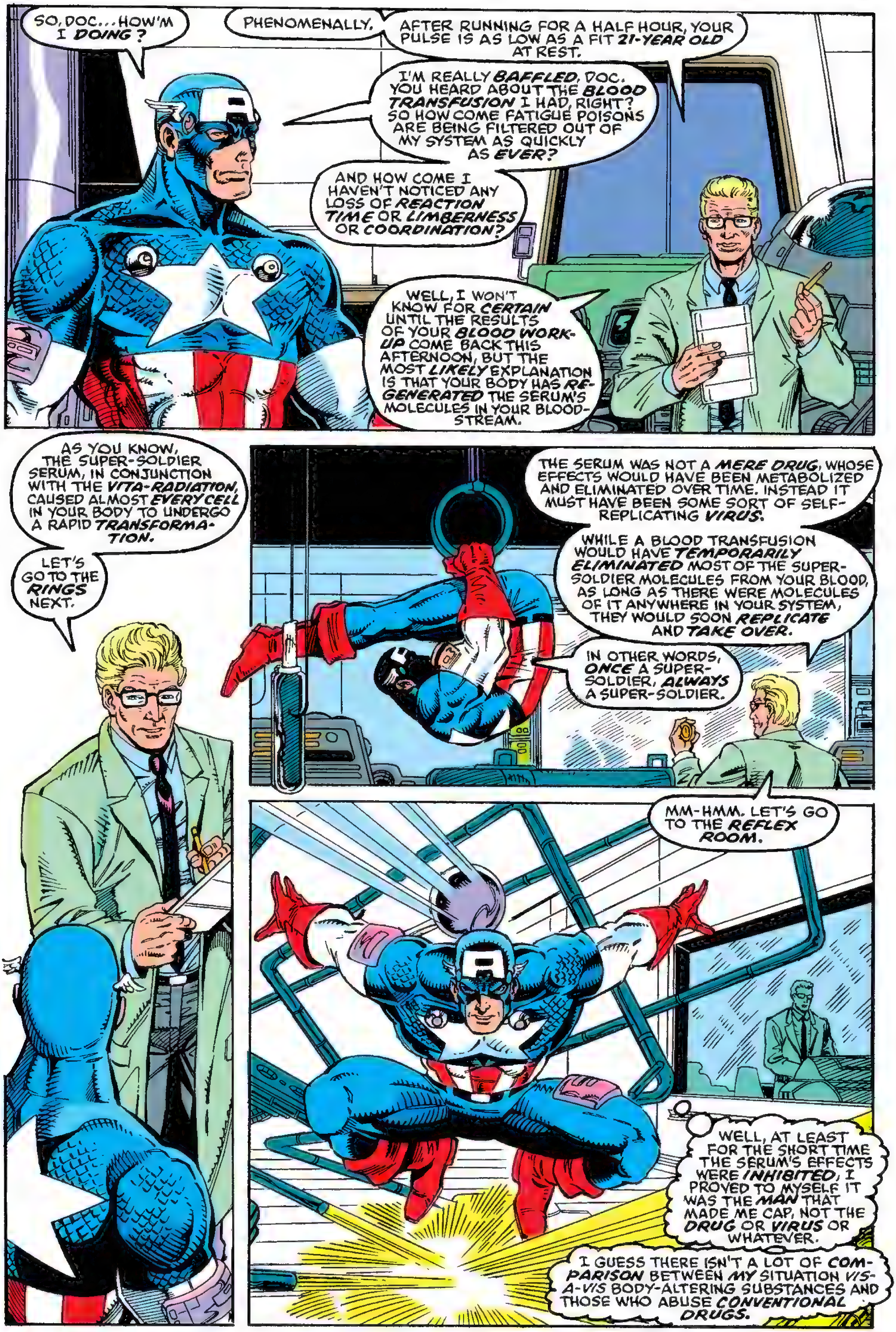
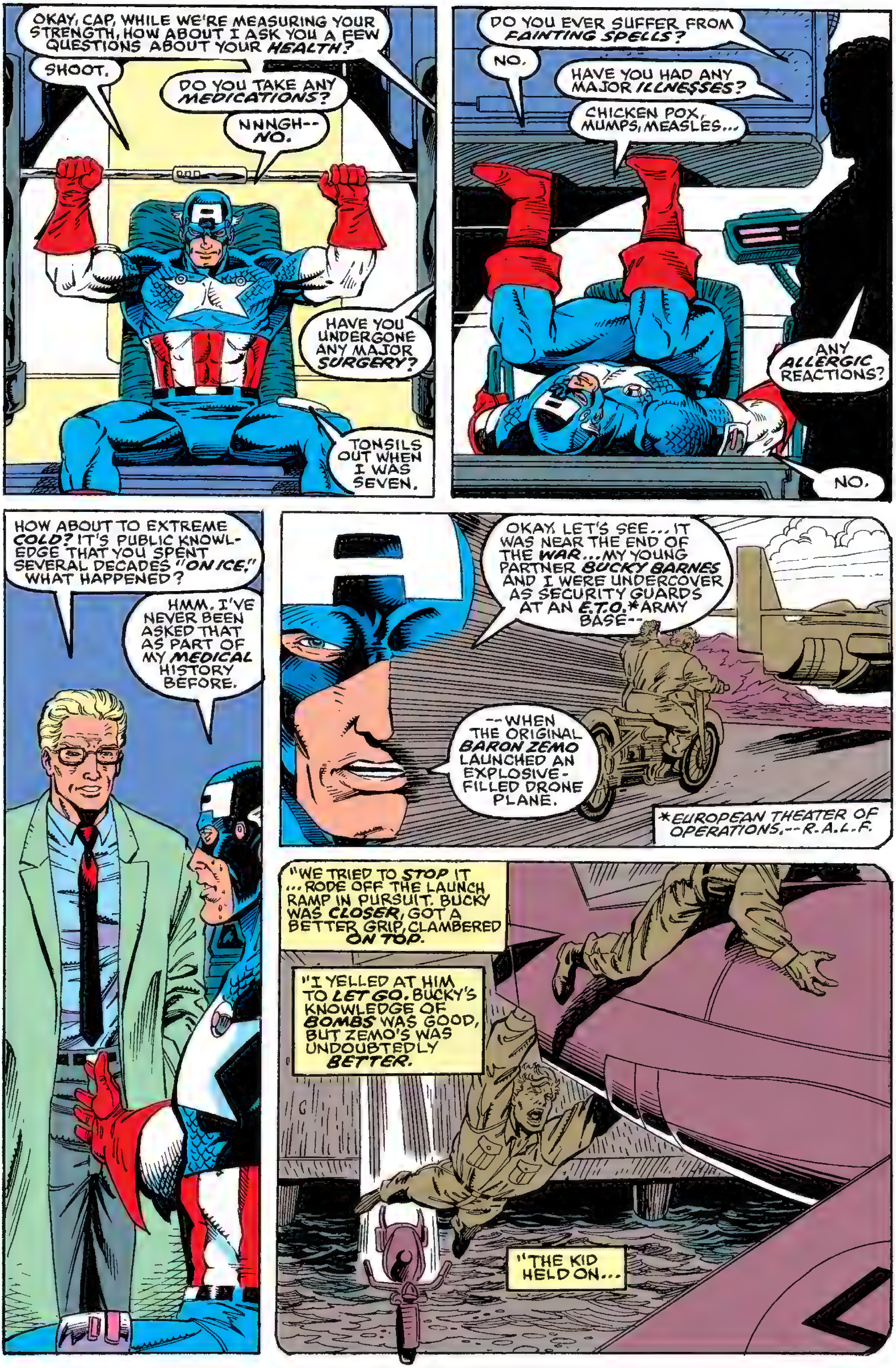
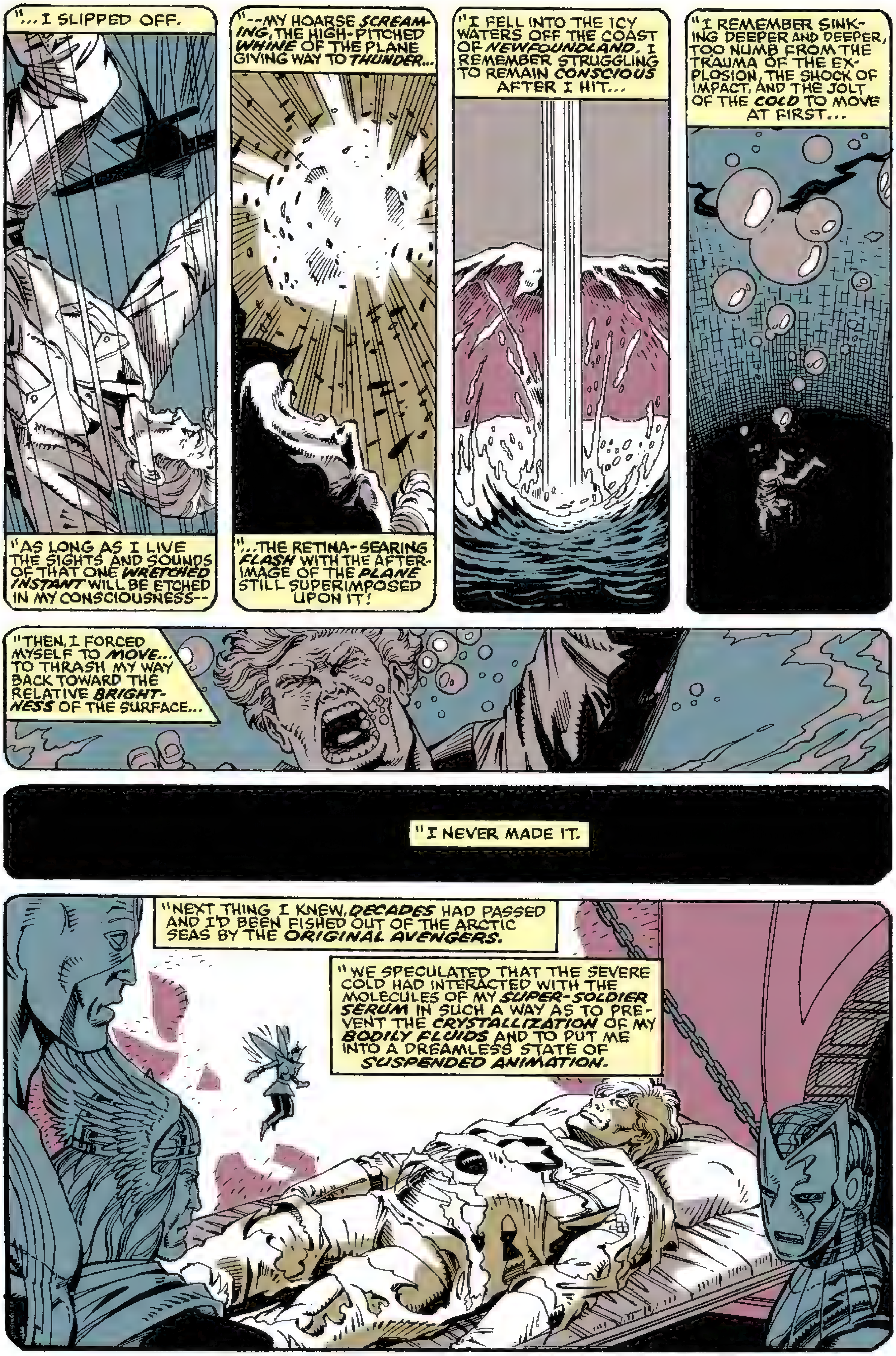
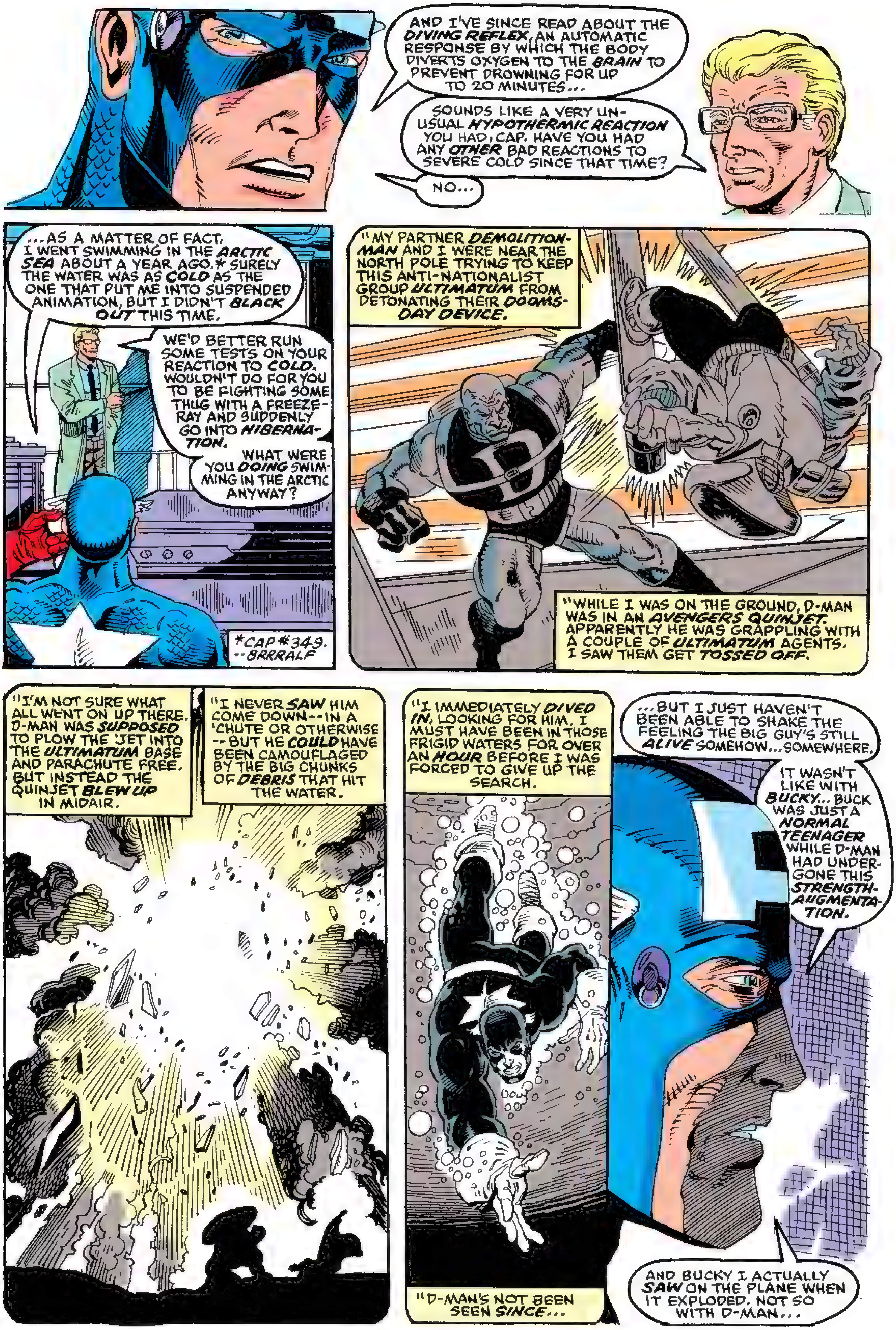
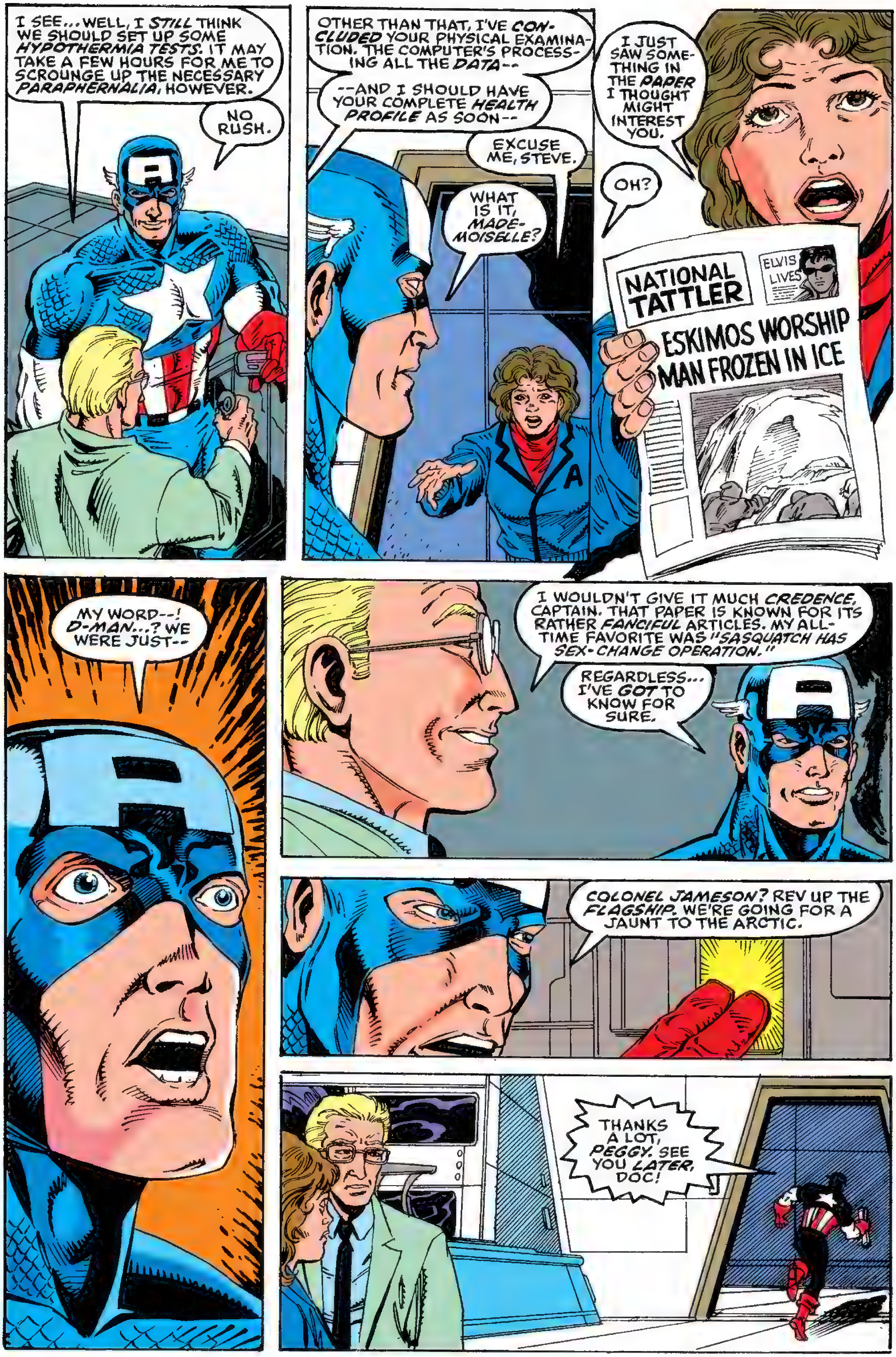
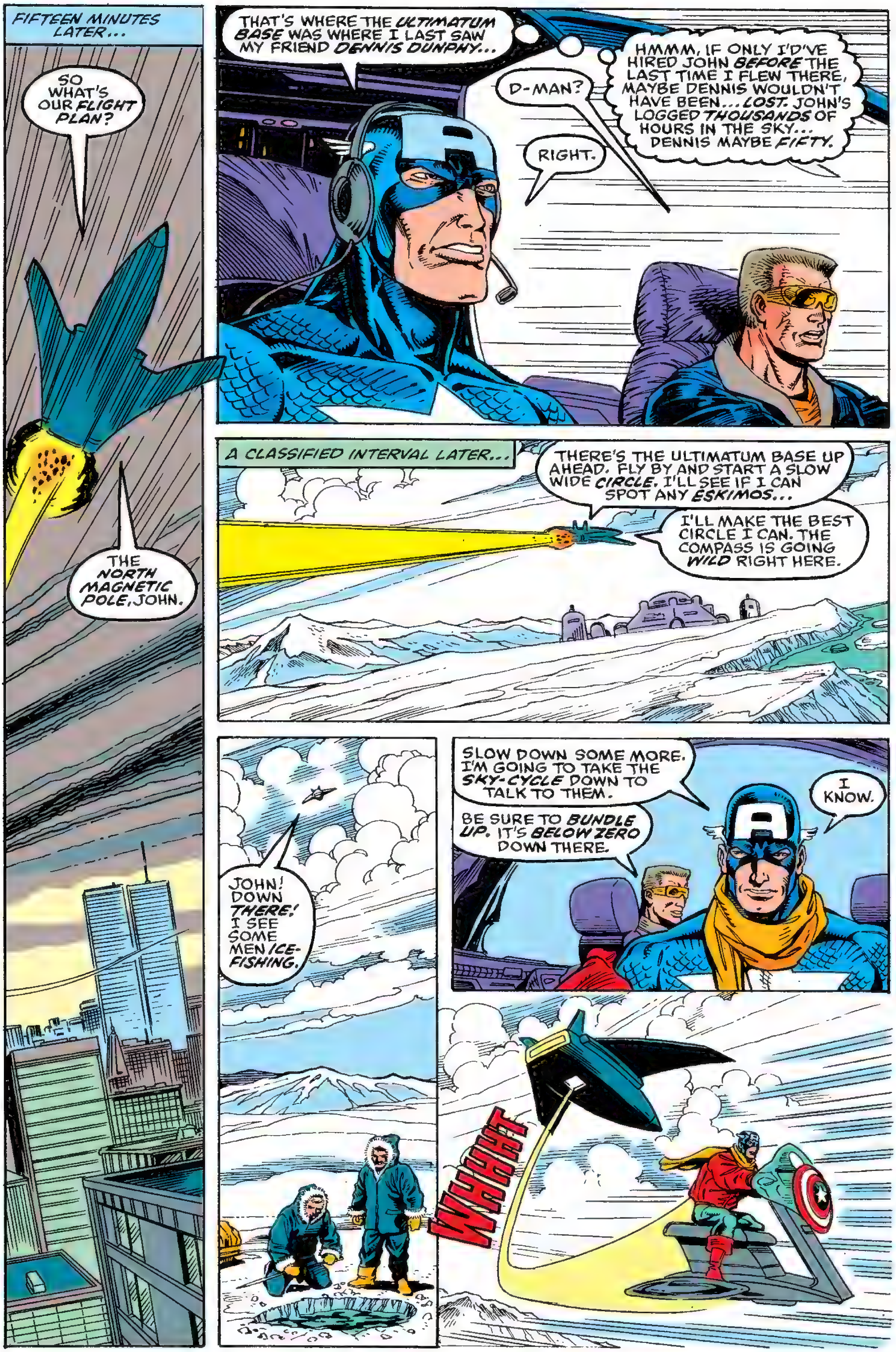

SO, DOC... HOW'M I *DOING*?
PHENOMENALLY.
AFTER RUNNING FOR A HALF HOUR, YOUR PULSE IS AS LOW AS A FIT *21-YEAR OLD* AT REST.
I'M REALLY *BAFFLED*, DOC. YOU HEARD ABOUT THE *BLOOD TRANSFUSION* I HAD, RIGHT? SO HOW COME FATIGUE POISONS ARE BEING FILTERED OUT OF MY SYSTEM AS QUICKLY AS *EVER?*
AND HOW COME I HAVEN'T NOTICED ANY LOSS OF *REACTION TIME* OR *LIMBERNESS* OR *COORDINATION?*
WELL, I WON'T KNOW FOR *CERTAIN* UNTIL THE RESULTS OF YOUR *BLOOD WORK-UP* COME BACK THIS AFTERNOON, BUT THE MOST *LIKELY* EXPLANATION IS THAT YOUR BODY HAS *REGENERATED* THE SERUM'S MOLECULES IN YOUR BLOODSTREAM.
AS YOU KNOW, THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE *VITA-RADIATION*, CAUSED ALMOST *EVERY CELL* IN YOUR BODY TO UNDERGO A RAPID *TRANSFORMATION*.
LET'S GO TO THE *RINGS* NEXT.
THE SERUM WAS NOT A *MERE DRUG*, WHOSE EFFECTS WOULD HAVE BEEN METABOLIZED AND ELIMINATED OVER TIME. INSTEAD IT MUST HAVE BEEN SOME SORT OF SELF-REPLICATING *VIRUS*.
WHILE A BLOOD TRANSFUSION WOULD HAVE *TEMPORARILY ELIMINATED* MOST OF THE SUPER-SOLDIER MOLECULES FROM YOUR BLOOD, AS LONG AS THERE WERE MOLECULES OF IT ANYWHERE IN YOUR SYSTEM, THEY WOULD SOON *REPLICATE* AND *TAKE OVER*.
IN OTHER WORDS, *ONCE* A SUPER-SOLDIER, *ALWAYS* A SUPER-SOLDIER.
MM-HMM. LET'S GO TO THE *REFLEX ROOM*.
WELL, AT LEAST FOR THE SHORT TIME THE SERUM'S EFFECTS WERE *INHIBITED*, I PROVED TO MYSELF IT WAS THE *MAN* THAT MADE ME CAP, NOT THE *DRUG* OR *VIRUS* OR WHATEVER.
I GUESS THERE ISN'T A LOT OF *COMPARISON* BETWEEN *MY* SITUATION *VIS-A-VIS* BODY-ALTERING SUBSTANCES AND THOSE WHO ABUSE *CONVENTIONAL DRUGS*.

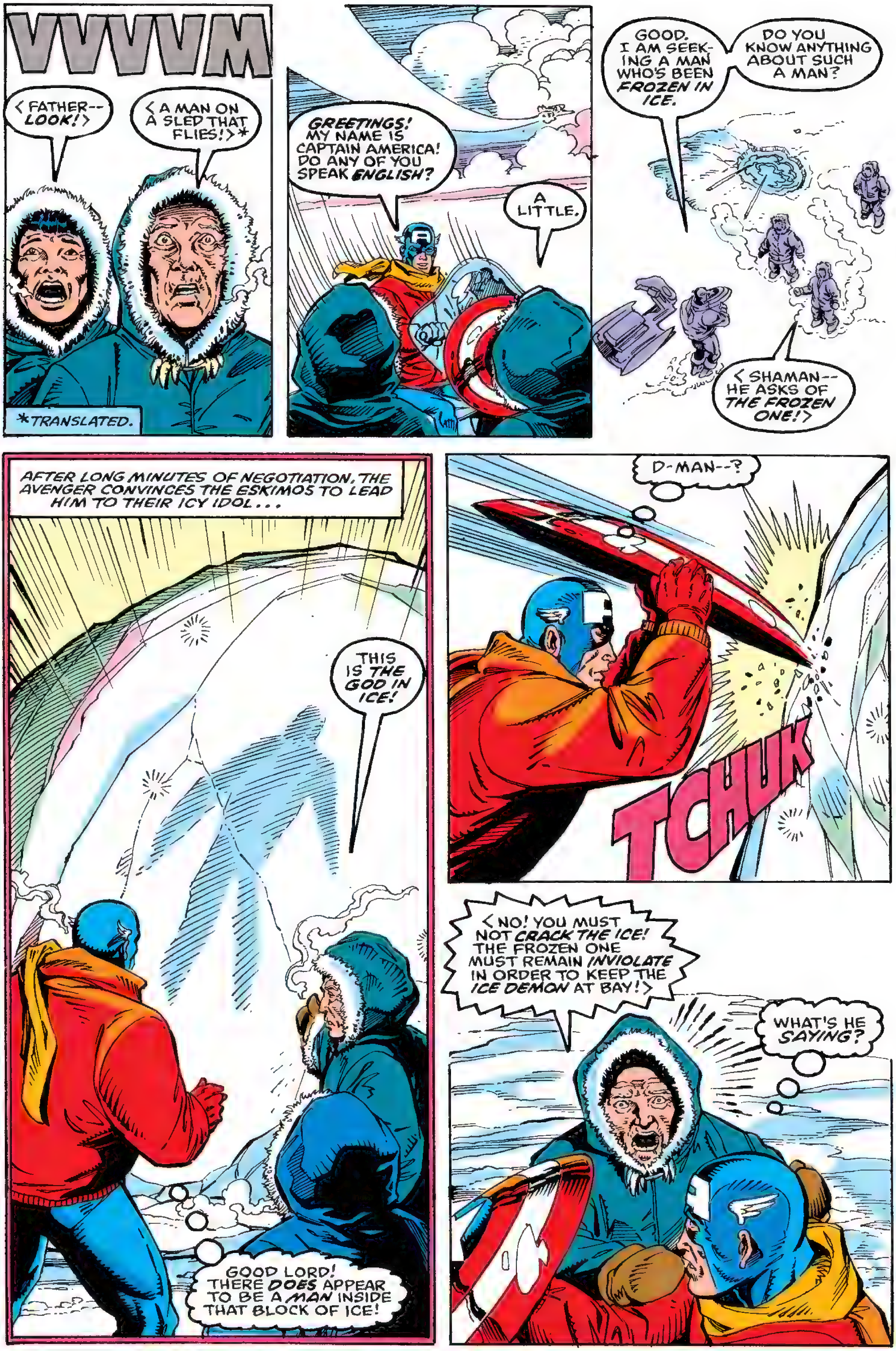

OKAY, CAP, WHILE WE'RE MEASURING YOUR STRENGTH, HOW ABOUT I ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR *HEALTH?*
SHOOT.
DO YOU TAKE ANY *MEDICATIONS?*
NNNGH-- *NO.*
HAVE YOU UNDERGONE ANY MAJOR *SURGERY?*
TONSILS OUT WHEN I WAS SEVEN.
DO YOU EVER SUFFER FROM *FAINTING SPELLS?*
NO.
HAVE YOU HAD ANY MAJOR *ILLNESSES?*
CHICKEN POX, MUMPS, MEASLES...
ANY *ALLERGIC* REACTIONS?
NO.
HOW ABOUT TO EXTREME *COLD?* IT'S PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE THAT YOU SPENT SEVERAL DECADES *"ON ICE."* WHAT HAPPENED?
HMM. I'VE NEVER BEEN ASKED THAT AS PART OF MY *MEDICAL* HISTORY BEFORE.
OKAY. LET'S SEE... IT WAS NEAR THE END OF THE *WAR*...MY YOUNG PARTNER *BUCKY BARNES* AND I WERE UNDERCOVER AS SECURITY GUARDS AT AN *E.T.O.** ARMY BASE--
--WHEN THE ORIGINAL *BARON ZEMO* LAUNCHED AN EXPLOSIVE-FILLED DRONE PLANE.
**EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS.--R.A.L.F.*
"WE TRIED TO *STOP* IT ...RODE OFF THE LAUNCH RAMP IN PURSUIT. BUCKY WAS *CLOSER*, GOT A BETTER GRIP, CLAMBERED *ON TOP.*
"I YELLED AT HIM TO *LET GO.* BUCKY'S KNOWLEDGE OF *BOMBS* WAS GOOD, BUT ZEMO'S WAS UNDOUBTEDLY *BETTER.*
"THE KID HELD ON...

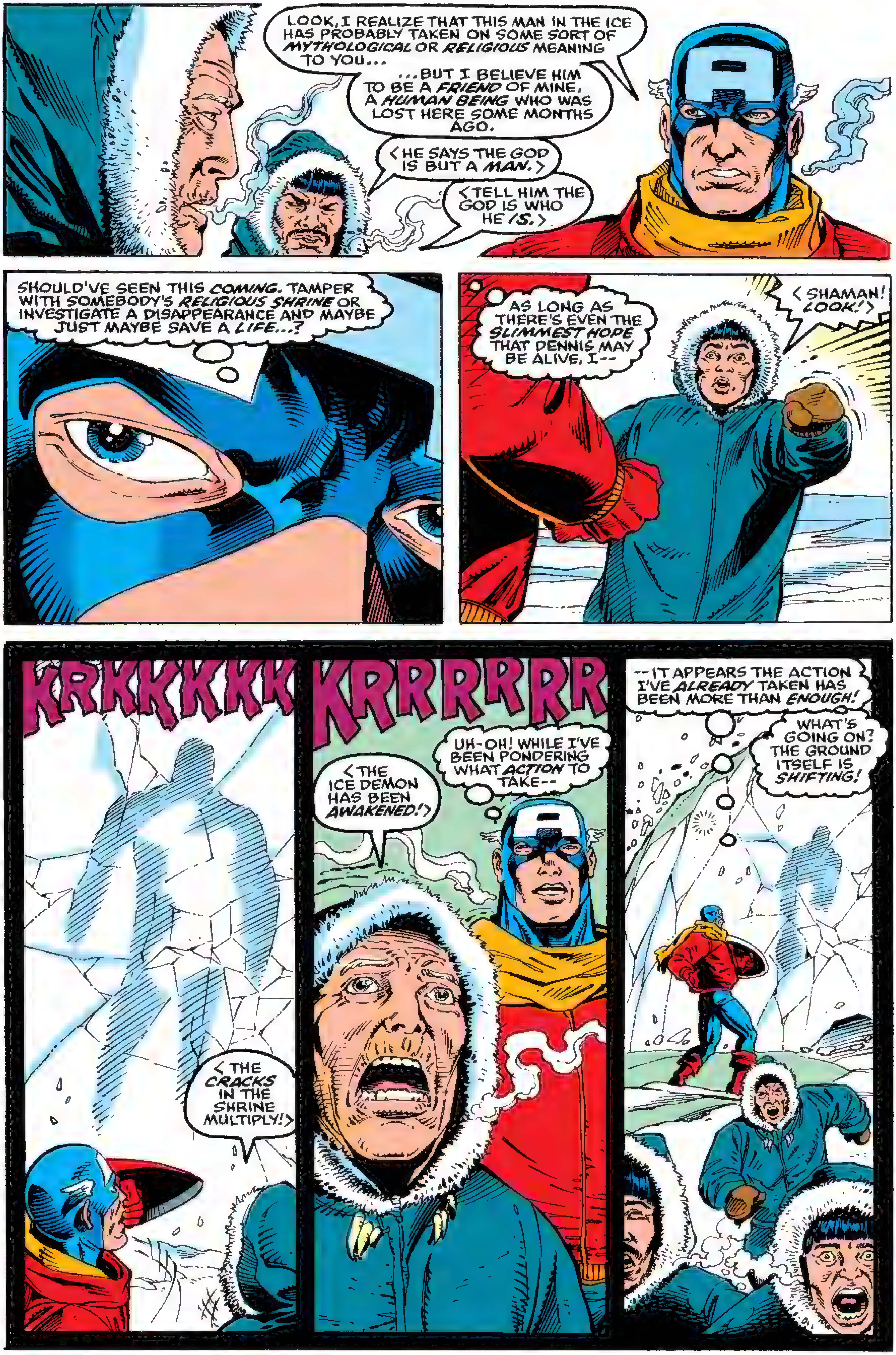

"...I SLIPPED OFF.
"AS LONG AS I LIVE THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THAT ONE *WRETCHED INSTANT* WILL BE ETCHED IN MY CONSCIOUSNESS--
"--MY HOARSE *SCREAMING*, THE HIGH-PITCHED *WHINE* OF THE PLANE GIVING WAY TO *THUNDER*...
"...THE RETINA-SEARING *FLASH* WITH THE AFTER-IMAGE OF THE *PLANE* STILL SUPERIMPOSED UPON IT!
"I FELL INTO THE ICY WATERS OFF THE COAST OF *NEWFOUNDLAND*. I REMEMBER STRUGGLING TO REMAIN *CONSCIOUS* AFTER I HIT...
"I REMEMBER SINKING DEEPER AND DEEPER, TOO NUMB FROM THE TRAUMA OF THE EXPLOSION, THE SHOCK OF IMPACT, AND THE JOLT OF THE *COLD* TO MOVE AT FIRST...
"THEN, I FORCED MYSELF TO *MOVE*... TO THRASH MY WAY BACK TOWARD THE RELATIVE *BRIGHTNESS* OF THE SURFACE...
"I NEVER MADE IT.
"NEXT THING I KNEW, *DECADES* HAD PASSED AND I'D BEEN FISHED OUT OF THE ARCTIC SEAS BY THE *ORIGINAL AVENGERS*.
"WE SPECULATED THAT THE SEVERE COLD HAD INTERACTED WITH THE MOLECULES OF MY *SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM* IN SUCH A WAY AS TO PREVENT THE *CRYSTALLIZATION* OF MY *BODILY FLUIDS* AND TO PUT ME INTO A DREAMLESS STATE OF *SUSPENDED ANIMATION*.

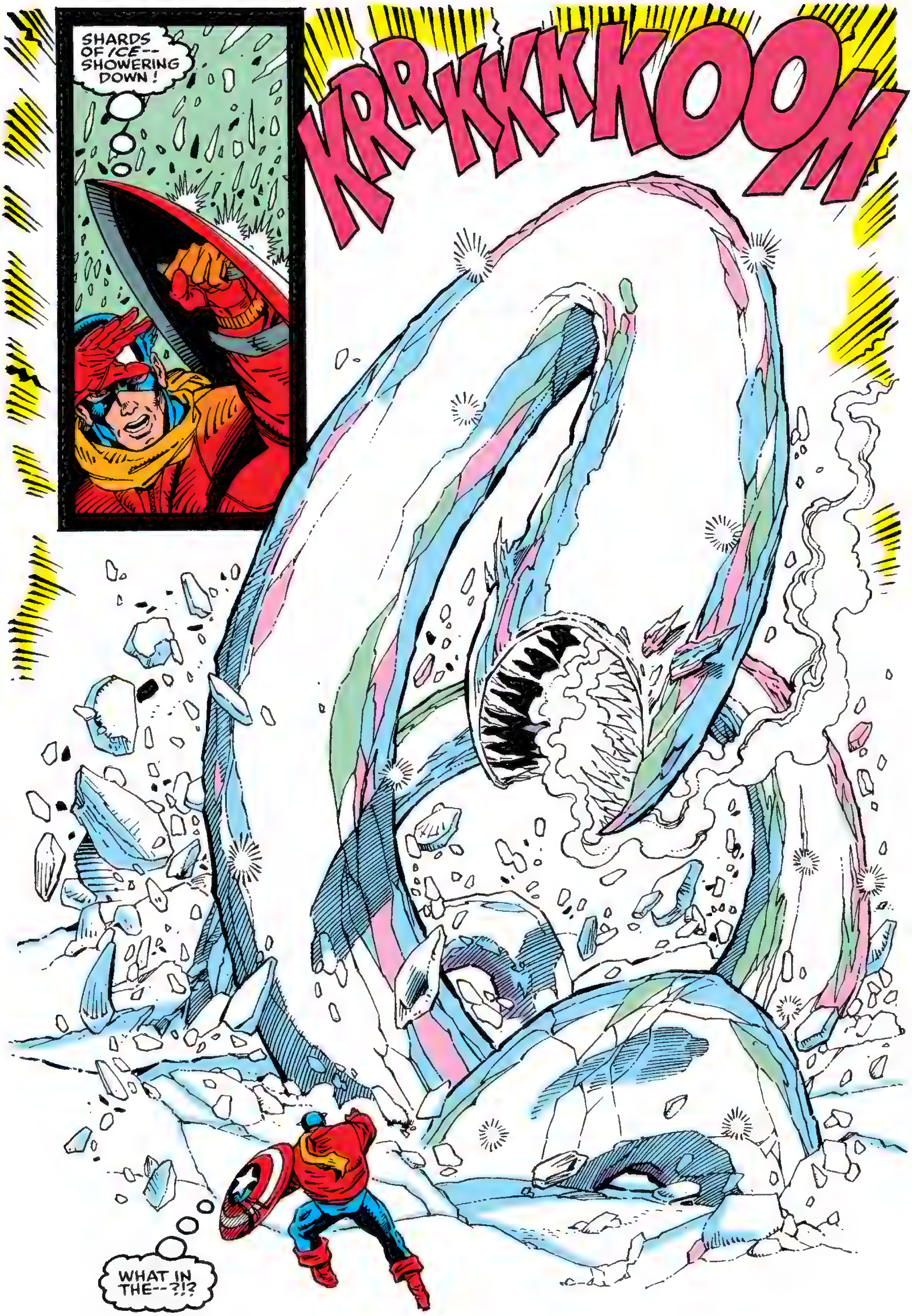

AND I'VE SINCE READ ABOUT THE DIVING REFLEX, AN AUTOMATIC RESPONSE BY WHICH THE BODY DIVERTS OXYGEN TO THE BRAIN TO PREVENT DROWNING FOR UP TO 20 MINUTES...
SOUNDS LIKE A VERY UNUSUAL HYPOTHERMIC REACTION YOU HAD, CAP. HAVE YOU HAD ANY OTHER BAD REACTIONS TO SEVERE COLD SINCE THAT TIME?
NO...
...AS A MATTER OF FACT, I WENT SWIMMING IN THE ARCTIC SEA ABOUT A YEAR AGO.* SURELY THE WATER WAS AS COLD AS THE ONE THAT PUT ME INTO SUSPENDED ANIMATION, BUT I DIDN'T BLACK OUT THIS TIME.
WE'D BETTER RUN SOME TESTS ON YOUR REACTION TO COLD. WOULDN'T DO FOR YOU TO BE FIGHTING SOME THUG WITH A FREEZE-RAY AND SUDDENLY GO INTO HIBERNATION.
WHAT WERE YOU DOING SWIMMING IN THE ARCTIC ANYWAY?
*CAP #349. --BRRRALF
"MY PARTNER DEMOLITION-MAN AND I WERE NEAR THE NORTH POLE TRYING TO KEEP THIS ANTI-NATIONALIST GROUP ULTIMATUM FROM DETONATING THEIR DOOMSDAY DEVICE.
"WHILE I WAS ON THE GROUND, D-MAN WAS IN AN AVENGERS QUINJET. APPARENTLY HE WAS GRAPPLING WITH A COUPLE OF ULTIMATUM AGENTS. I SAW THEM GET TOSSED OFF.
"I'M NOT SURE WHAT ALL WENT ON UP THERE. D-MAN WAS SUPPOSED TO PLOW THE 'JET INTO THE ULTIMATUM BASE AND PARACHUTE FREE. BUT INSTEAD THE QUINJET BLEW UP IN MIDAIR.
"I NEVER SAW HIM COME DOWN--IN A 'CHUTE OR OTHERWISE --BUT HE COULD HAVE BEEN CAMOUFLAGED BY THE BIG CHUNKS OF DEBRIS THAT HIT THE WATER.
"I IMMEDIATELY DIVED IN, LOOKING FOR HIM. I MUST HAVE BEEN IN THOSE FRIGID WATERS FOR OVER AN HOUR BEFORE I WAS FORCED TO GIVE UP THE SEARCH.
"D-MAN'S NOT BEEN SEEN SINCE...
...BUT I JUST HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO SHAKE THE FEELING THE BIG GUY'S STILL ALIVE SOMEHOW...SOMEWHERE.
IT WASN'T LIKE WITH BUCKY... BUCK WAS JUST A NORMAL TEENAGER WHILE D-MAN HAD UNDERGONE THIS STRENGTH-AUGMENTATION.
AND BUCKY I ACTUALLY SAW ON THE PLANE WHEN IT EXPLODED. NOT SO WITH D-MAN...

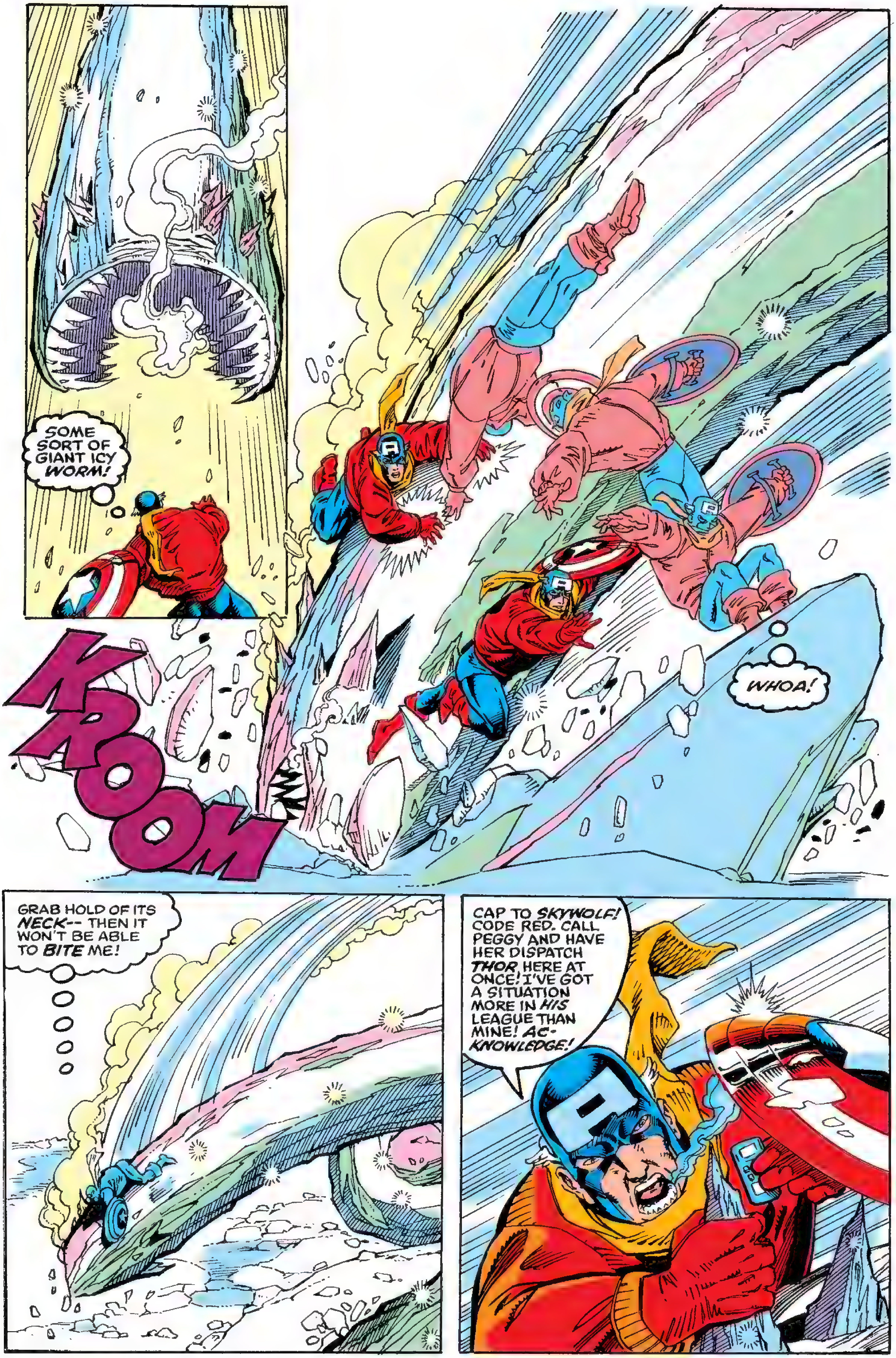

I SEE... WELL, I *STILL* THINK WE SHOULD SET UP SOME *HYPOTHERMIA TESTS.* IT MAY TAKE A FEW HOURS FOR ME TO SCROUNGE UP THE NECESSARY *PARAPHERNALIA,* HOWEVER.
NO RUSH.
OTHER THAN THAT, I'VE *CONCLUDED* YOUR PHYSICAL EXAMINATION. THE COMPUTER'S PROCESSING ALL THE *DATA*--
--AND I SHOULD HAVE YOUR COMPLETE *HEALTH PROFILE* AS SOON--
EXCUSE ME, STEVE.
WHAT IS IT, *MADEMOISELLE?*
I JUST SAW SOMETHING IN THE *PAPER* I THOUGHT MIGHT INTEREST YOU.
OH?
NATIONAL TATTLER
ELVIS LIVES
ESKIMOS WORSHIP MAN FROZEN IN ICE
MY WORD--! *D-MAN...?* WE WERE JUST--
I WOULDN'T GIVE IT MUCH *CREDENCE,* CAPTAIN. THAT PAPER IS KNOWN FOR ITS RATHER *FANCIFUL* ARTICLES. MY ALL-TIME FAVORITE WAS *"SASQUATCH HAS SEX-CHANGE OPERATION."*
REGARDLESS... I'VE *GOT* TO KNOW FOR SURE.
COLONEL JAMESON? REV UP THE *FLAGSHIP.* WE'RE GOING FOR A JAUNT TO THE ARCTIC.
THANKS A LOT, *PEGGY.* SEE YOU *LATER,* DOC!

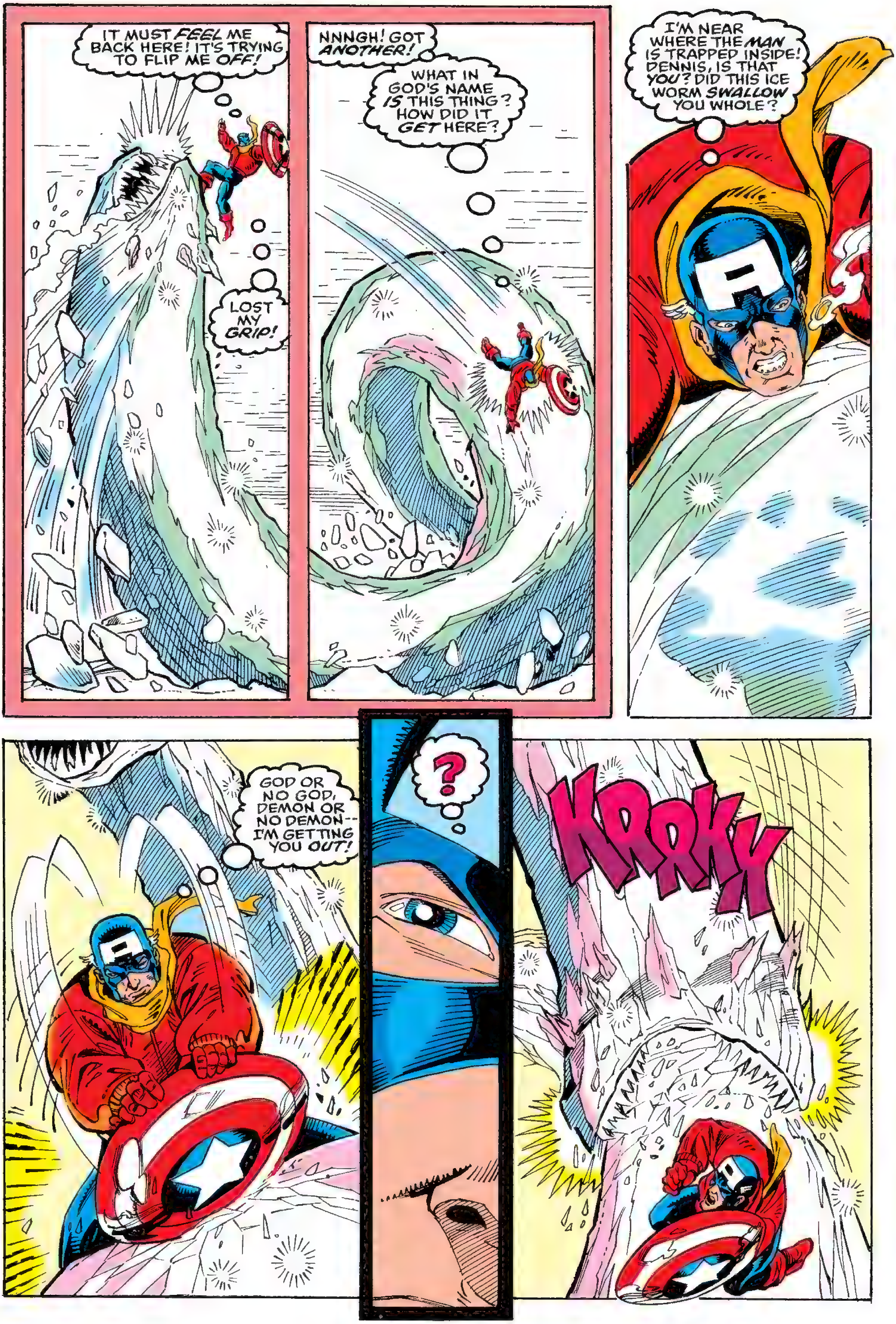

FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER...
SO WHAT'S OUR FLIGHT PLAN?
THE NORTH MAGNETIC POLE, JOHN.
THAT'S WHERE THE ULTIMATUM BASE WAS WHERE I LAST SAW MY FRIEND DENNIS DUNPHY...
D-MAN?
RIGHT.
HMMM, IF ONLY I'D'VE HIRED JOHN BEFORE THE LAST TIME I FLEW THERE, MAYBE DENNIS WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN... LOST. JOHN'S LOGGED THOUSANDS OF HOURS IN THE SKY... DENNIS MAYBE FIFTY.
A CLASSIFIED INTERVAL LATER...
THERE'S THE ULTIMATUM BASE UP AHEAD. FLY BY AND START A SLOW WIDE CIRCLE. I'LL SEE IF I CAN SPOT ANY ESKIMOS...
I'LL MAKE THE BEST CIRCLE I CAN. THE COMPASS IS GOING WILD RIGHT HERE.
JOHN! DOWN THERE! I SEE SOME MEN ICE-FISHING.
SLOW DOWN SOME MORE. I'M GOING TO TAKE THE SKY-CYCLE DOWN TO TALK TO THEM.
BE SURE TO BUNDLE UP. IT'S BELOW ZERO DOWN THERE.
I KNOW.
WHHHT

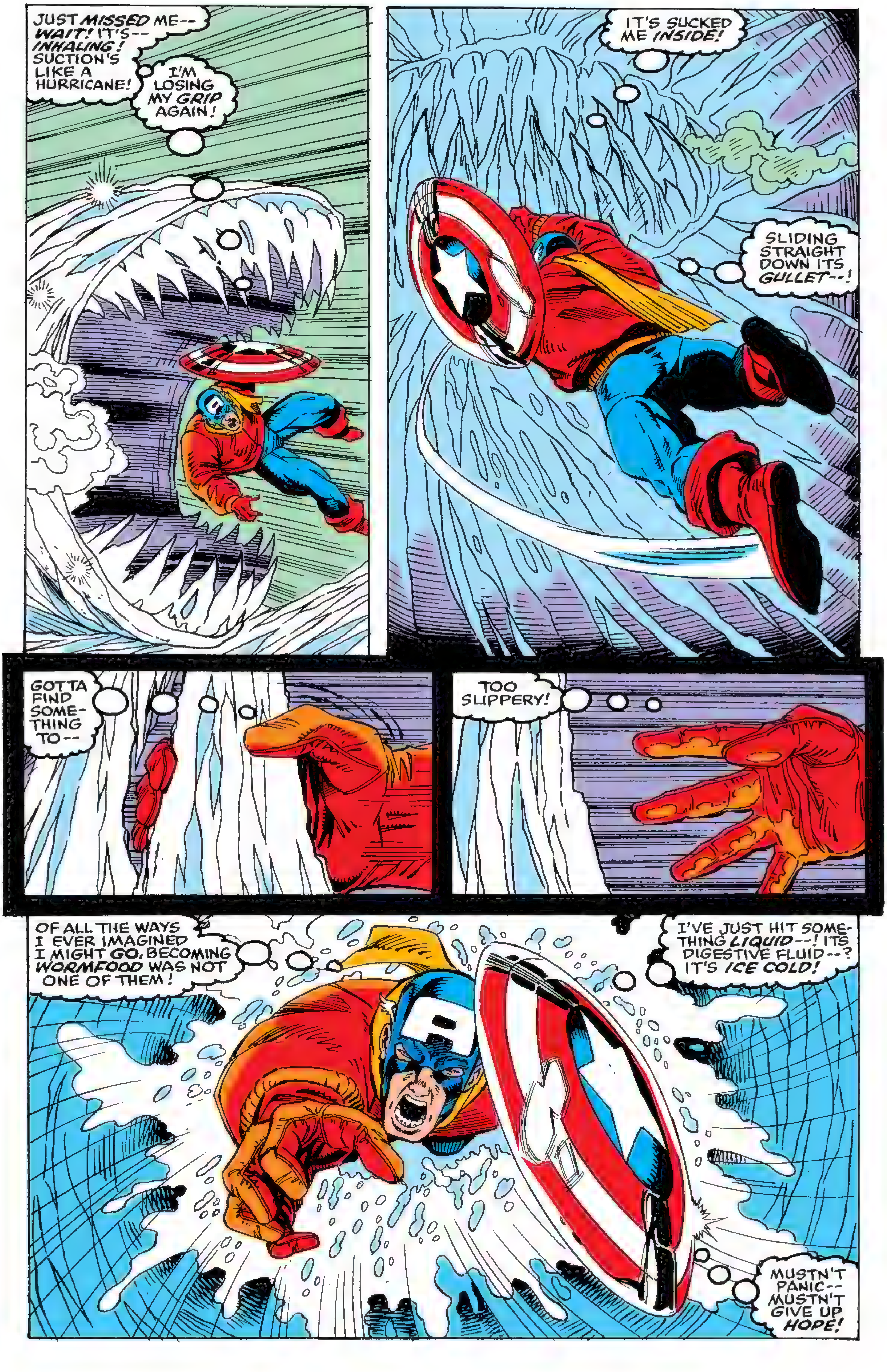

VVVVM
< FATHER-- LOOK! >
< A MAN ON A SLED THAT FLIES! >*
*TRANSLATED.
GREETINGS! MY NAME IS CAPTAIN AMERICA! DO ANY OF YOU SPEAK ENGLISH?
A LITTLE.
GOOD. I AM SEEKING A MAN WHO'S BEEN FROZEN IN ICE.
DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT SUCH A MAN?
< SHAMAN-- HE ASKS OF THE FROZEN ONE! >
AFTER LONG MINUTES OF NEGOTIATION, THE AVENGER CONVINCES THE ESKIMOS TO LEAD HIM TO THEIR ICY IDOL...
THIS IS THE GOD IN ICE!
GOOD LORD! THERE DOES APPEAR TO BE A MAN INSIDE THAT BLOCK OF ICE!
D-MAN--?
TCHUK
< NO! YOU MUST NOT CRACK THE ICE! THE FROZEN ONE MUST REMAIN INVIOLATE IN ORDER TO KEEP THE ICE DEMON AT BAY! >
WHAT'S HE SAYING?

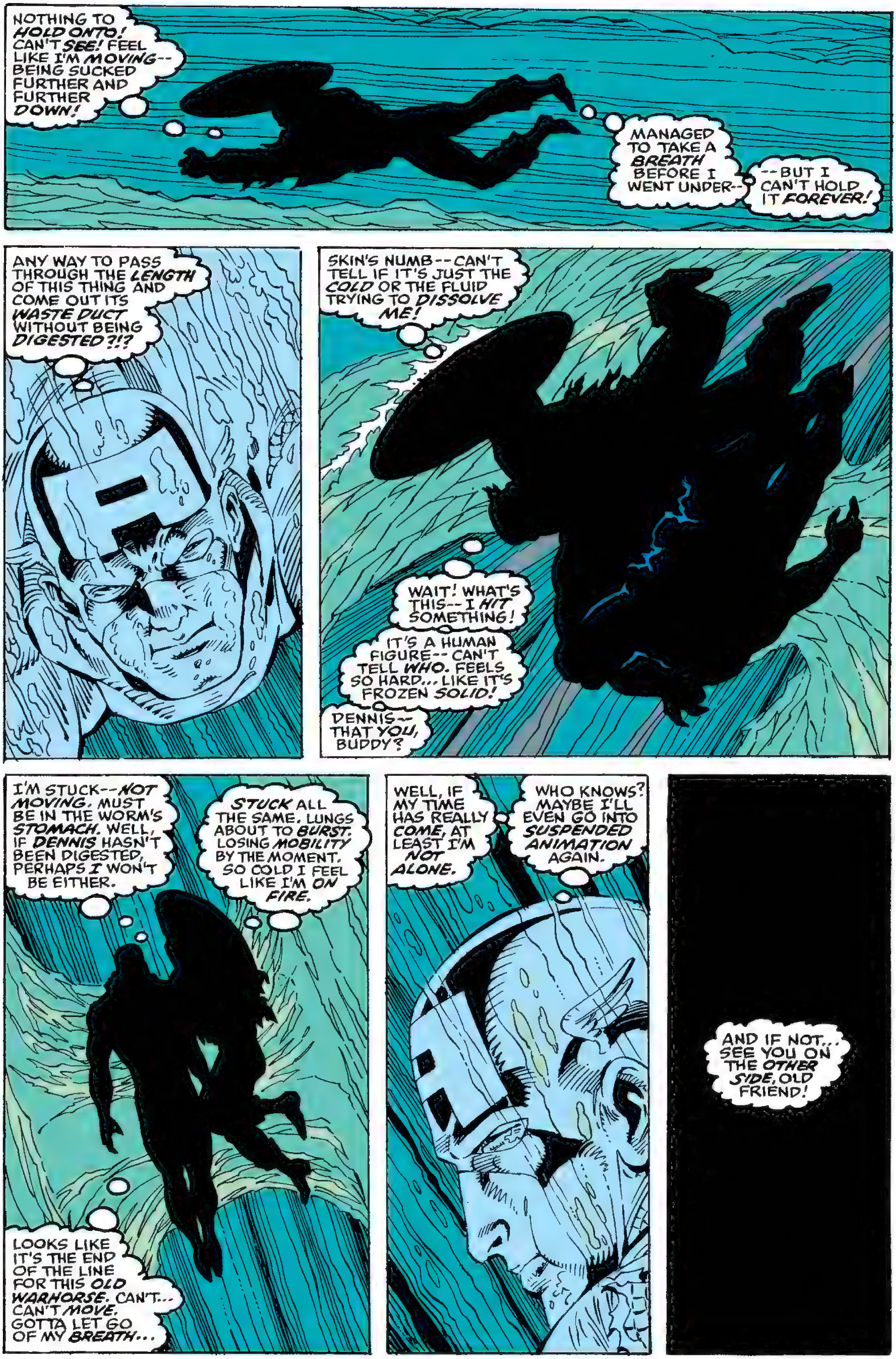

LOOK, I REALIZE THAT THIS MAN IN THE ICE HAS PROBABLY TAKEN ON SOME SORT OF *MYTHOLOGICAL* OR *RELIGIOUS* MEANING TO YOU...
...BUT I BELIEVE HIM TO BE A *FRIEND* OF MINE, A *HUMAN BEING* WHO WAS LOST HERE SOME MONTHS AGO.
<HE SAYS THE GOD IS BUT A *MAN.*>
<TELL HIM THE GOD IS WHO HE *IS.*>
SHOULD'VE SEEN THIS *COMING.* TAMPER WITH SOMEBODY'S *RELIGIOUS SHRINE* OR INVESTIGATE A DISAPPEARANCE AND MAYBE JUST MAYBE SAVE A *LIFE...?*
AS LONG AS THERE'S EVEN THE *SLIMMEST HOPE* THAT DENNIS MAY BE ALIVE, I--
<SHAMAN! *LOOK!*>
KRKKKKK
<THE *CRACKS* IN THE SHRINE MULTIPLY!>
KRRRRRR
<THE ICE DEMON HAS BEEN *AWAKENED!*>
UH-OH! WHILE I'VE BEEN PONDERING WHAT *ACTION* TO TAKE--
--IT APPEARS THE ACTION I'VE *ALREADY* TAKEN HAS BEEN MORE THAN *ENOUGH!*
WHAT'S GOING ON? THE GROUND ITSELF IS *SHIFTING!*

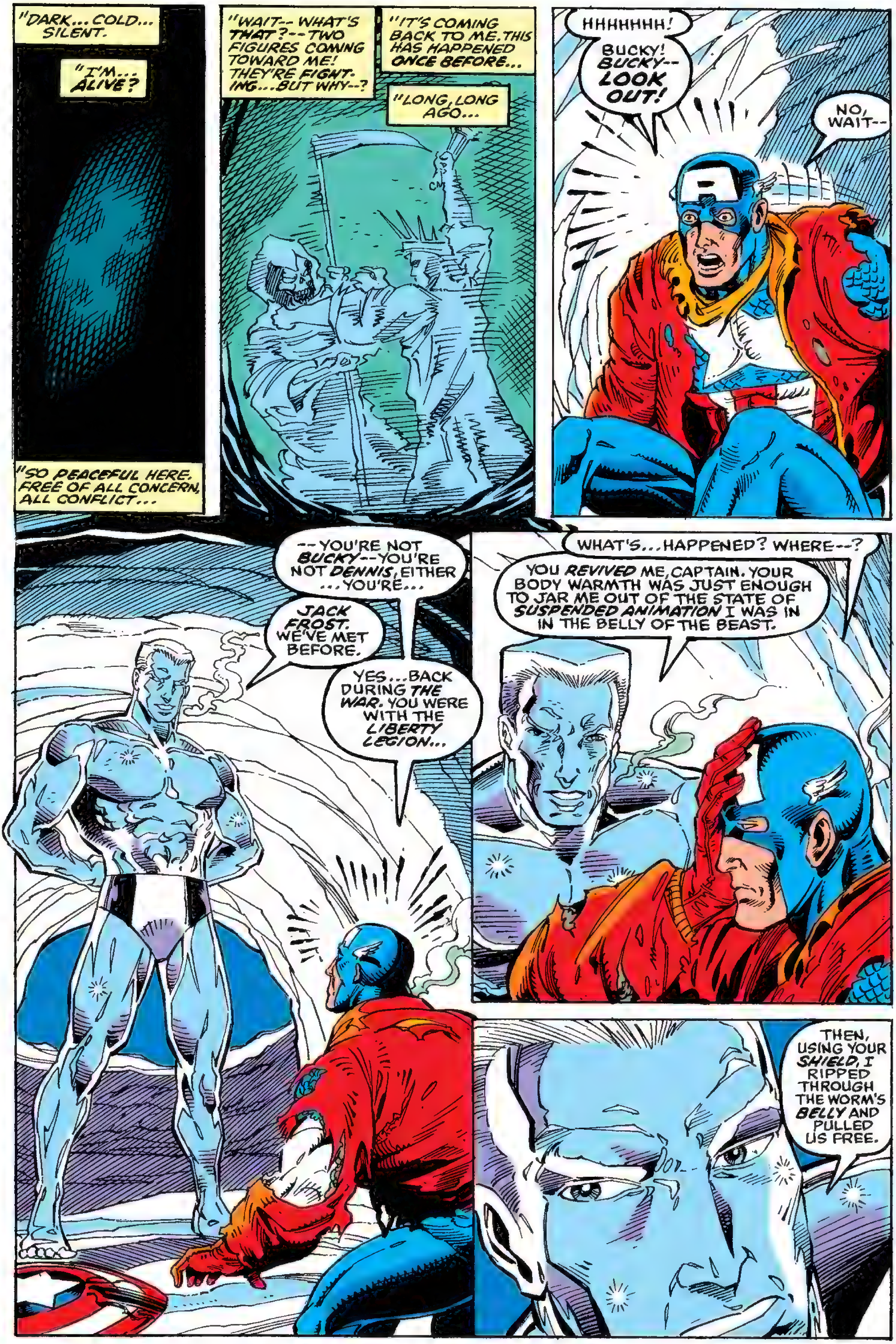

SHARDS OF ICE-- SHOWERING DOWN!
KRRKKKKOOM
WHAT IN THE--?!?

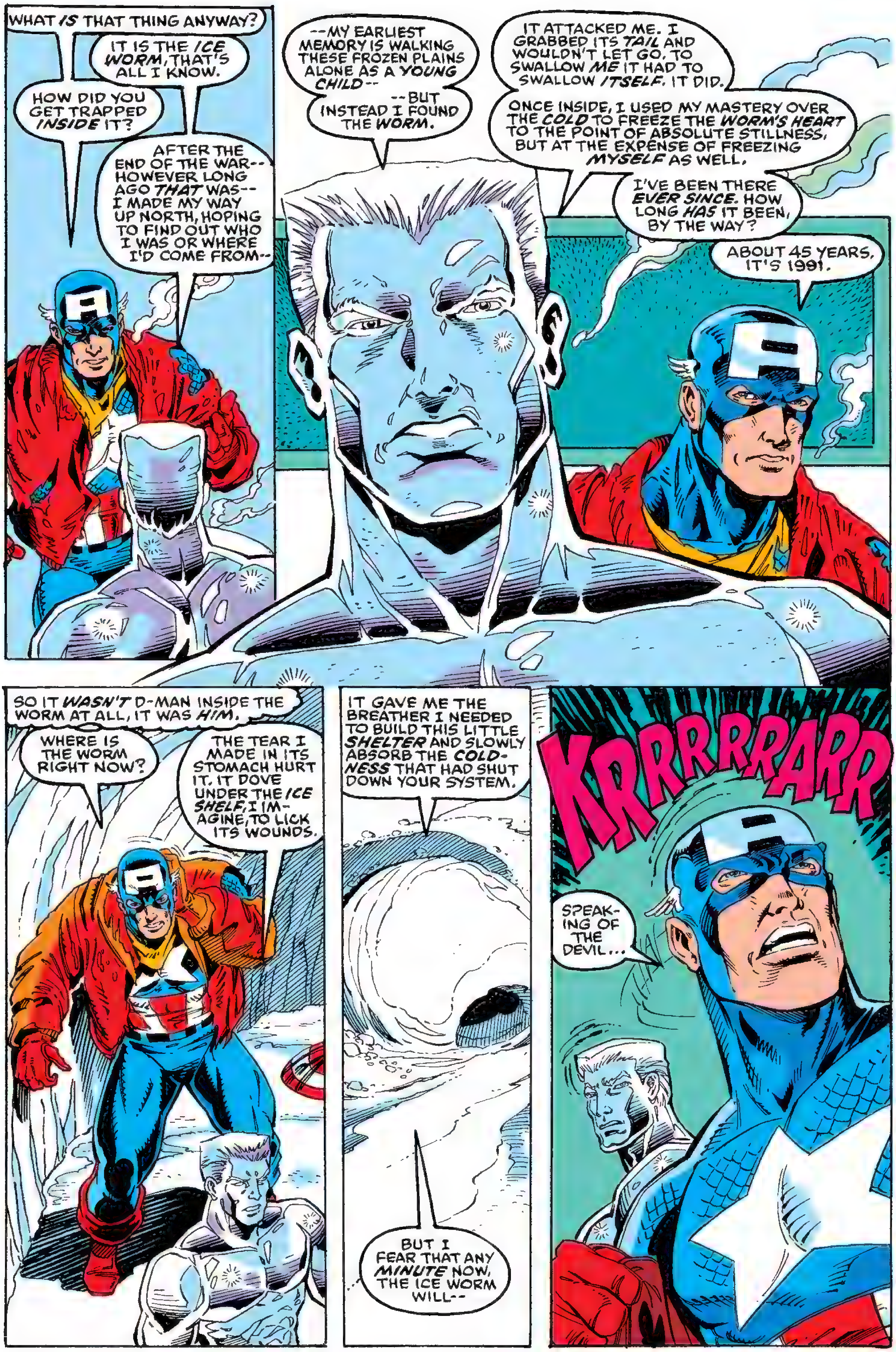

SOME SORT OF GIANT ICY *WORM!*
KROOM
WHOA!
GRAB HOLD OF ITS *NECK*-- THEN IT WON'T BE ABLE TO *BITE* ME!
CAP TO *SKYWOLF!* CODE RED. CALL PEGGY AND HAVE HER DISPATCH *THOR* HERE AT ONCE! I'VE GOT A SITUATION MORE IN *HIS* LEAGUE THAN MINE! *ACKNOWLEDGE!*

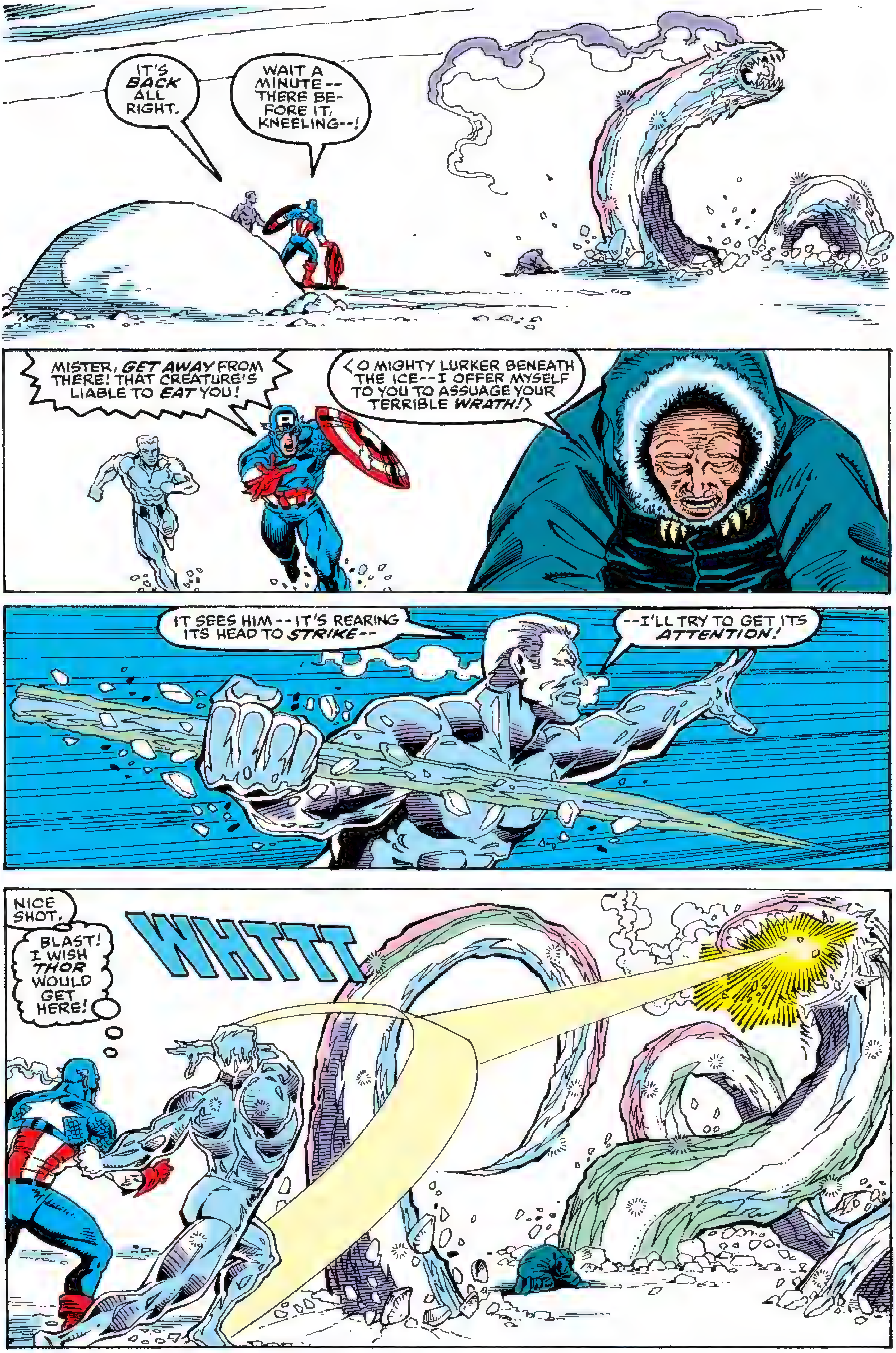

IT MUST *FEEL* ME BACK HERE! IT'S TRYING TO FLIP ME *OFF!*
LOST MY *GRIP!*
NNNGH! GOT *ANOTHER!*
WHAT IN GOD'S NAME *IS* THIS THING? HOW DID IT *GET* HERE?
I'M NEAR WHERE THE *MAN* IS TRAPPED INSIDE! DENNIS, IS THAT *YOU?* DID THIS ICE WORM *SWALLOW* YOU WHOLE?
GOD OR NO GOD, DEMON OR NO DEMON-- I'M GETTING YOU *OUT!*
?
KRRKK

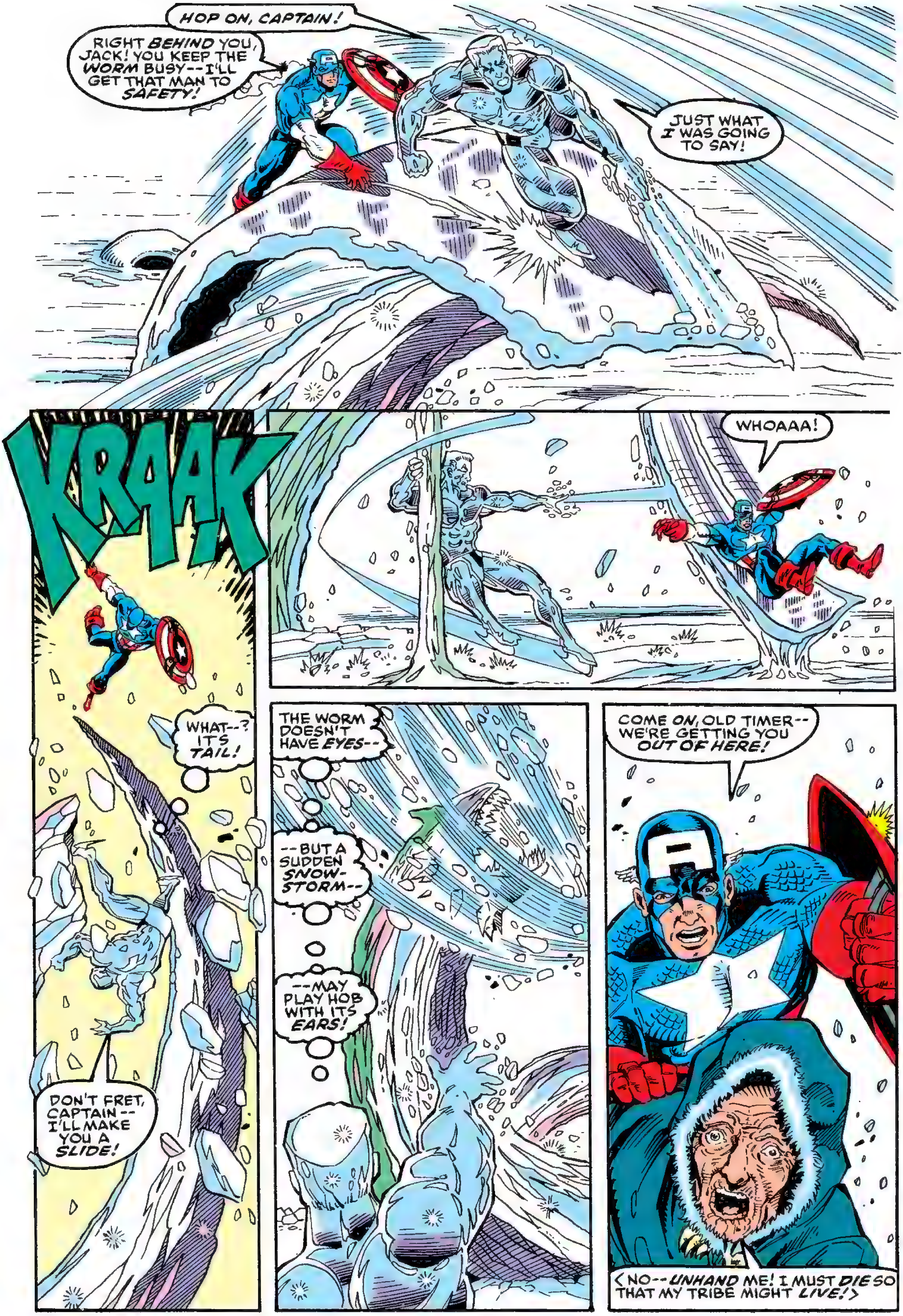

JUST MISSED ME-- WAIT! IT'S-- INHALING! SUCTION'S LIKE A HURRICANE!
I'M LOSING MY GRIP AGAIN!
IT'S SUCKED ME INSIDE!
SLIDING STRAIGHT DOWN ITS GULLET--!
GOTTA FIND SOMETHING TO--
TOO SLIPPERY!
OF ALL THE WAYS I EVER IMAGINED I MIGHT GO, BECOMING WORMFOOD WAS NOT ONE OF THEM!
I'VE JUST HIT SOMETHING LIQUID--! ITS DIGESTIVE FLUID--? IT'S ICE COLD!
MUSTN'T PANIC-- MUSTN'T GIVE UP HOPE!

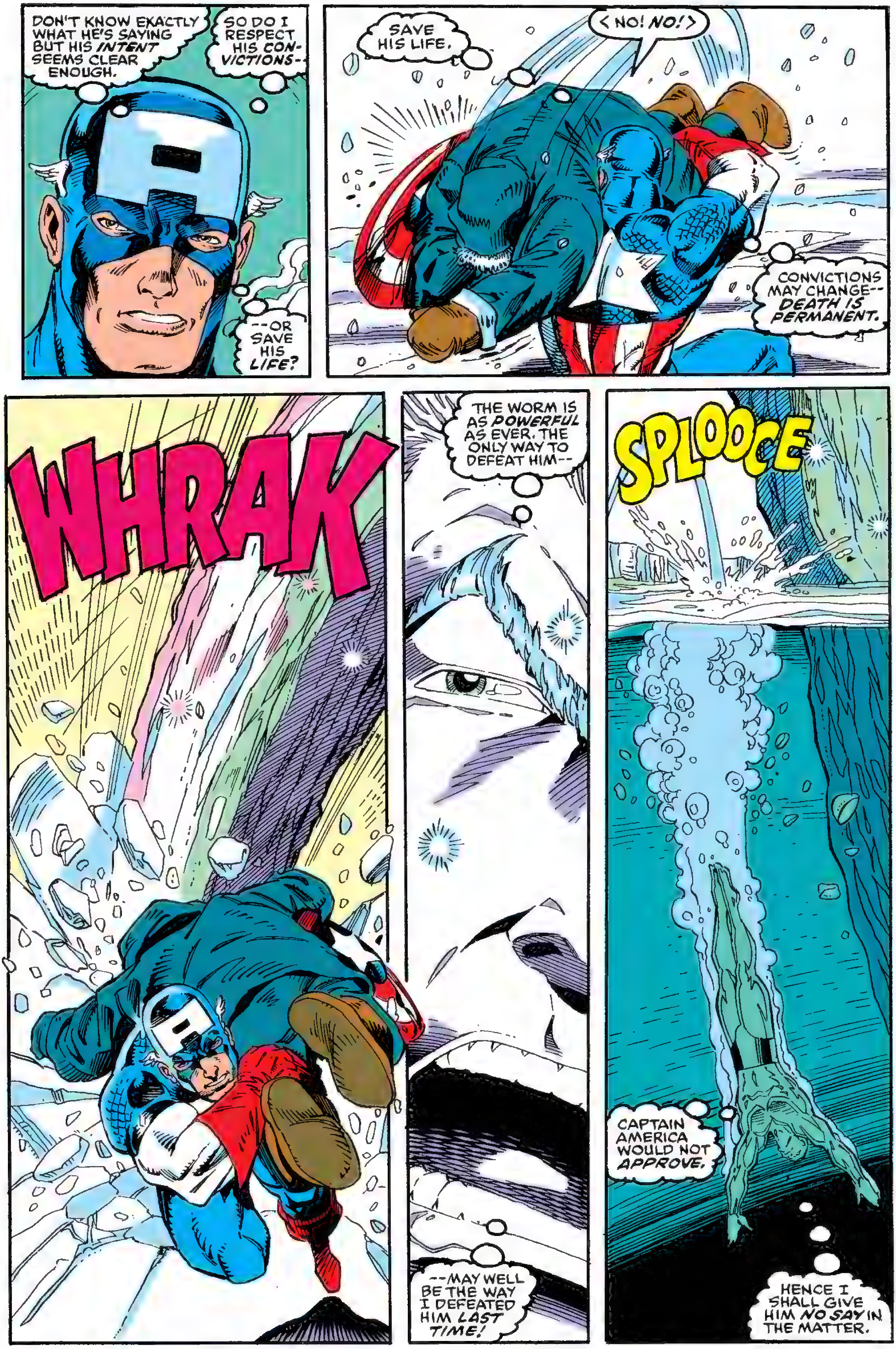

NOTHING TO *HOLD ONTO!* CAN'T *SEE!* FEEL LIKE I'M *MOVING*-- BEING SUCKED FURTHER AND FURTHER *DOWN!*
MANAGED TO TAKE A *BREATH* BEFORE I WENT UNDER--
--BUT I CAN'T HOLD IT *FOREVER!*
ANY WAY TO PASS THROUGH THE *LENGTH* OF THIS THING AND COME OUT ITS *WASTE DUCT* WITHOUT BEING *DIGESTED?!?*
SKIN'S NUMB--CAN'T TELL IF IT'S JUST THE *COLD* OR THE FLUID TRYING TO *DISSOLVE ME!*
WAIT! WHAT'S THIS--I *HIT* SOMETHING!
IT'S A HUMAN FIGURE--CAN'T TELL *WHO.* FEELS SO HARD... LIKE IT'S FROZEN *SOLID!*
DENNIS--THAT *YOU,* BUDDY?
I'M STUCK--*NOT MOVING.* MUST BE IN THE WORM'S *STOMACH.* WELL, IF *DENNIS* HASN'T BEEN DIGESTED, PERHAPS *I* WON'T BE EITHER.
STUCK ALL THE SAME. LUNGS ABOUT TO *BURST.* LOSING *MOBILITY* BY THE MOMENT. SO COLD I FEEL LIKE I'M *ON FIRE.*
LOOKS LIKE IT'S THE END OF THE LINE FOR THIS *OLD WARHORSE.* CAN'T... CAN'T *MOVE.* GOTTA LET GO OF MY *BREATH...*
WELL, IF MY TIME HAS REALLY *COME,* AT LEAST I'M *NOT ALONE.*
WHO KNOWS? MAYBE I'LL EVEN GO INTO *SUSPENDED ANIMATION* AGAIN.
AND IF NOT... SEE YOU ON THE *OTHER SIDE,* OLD FRIEND!

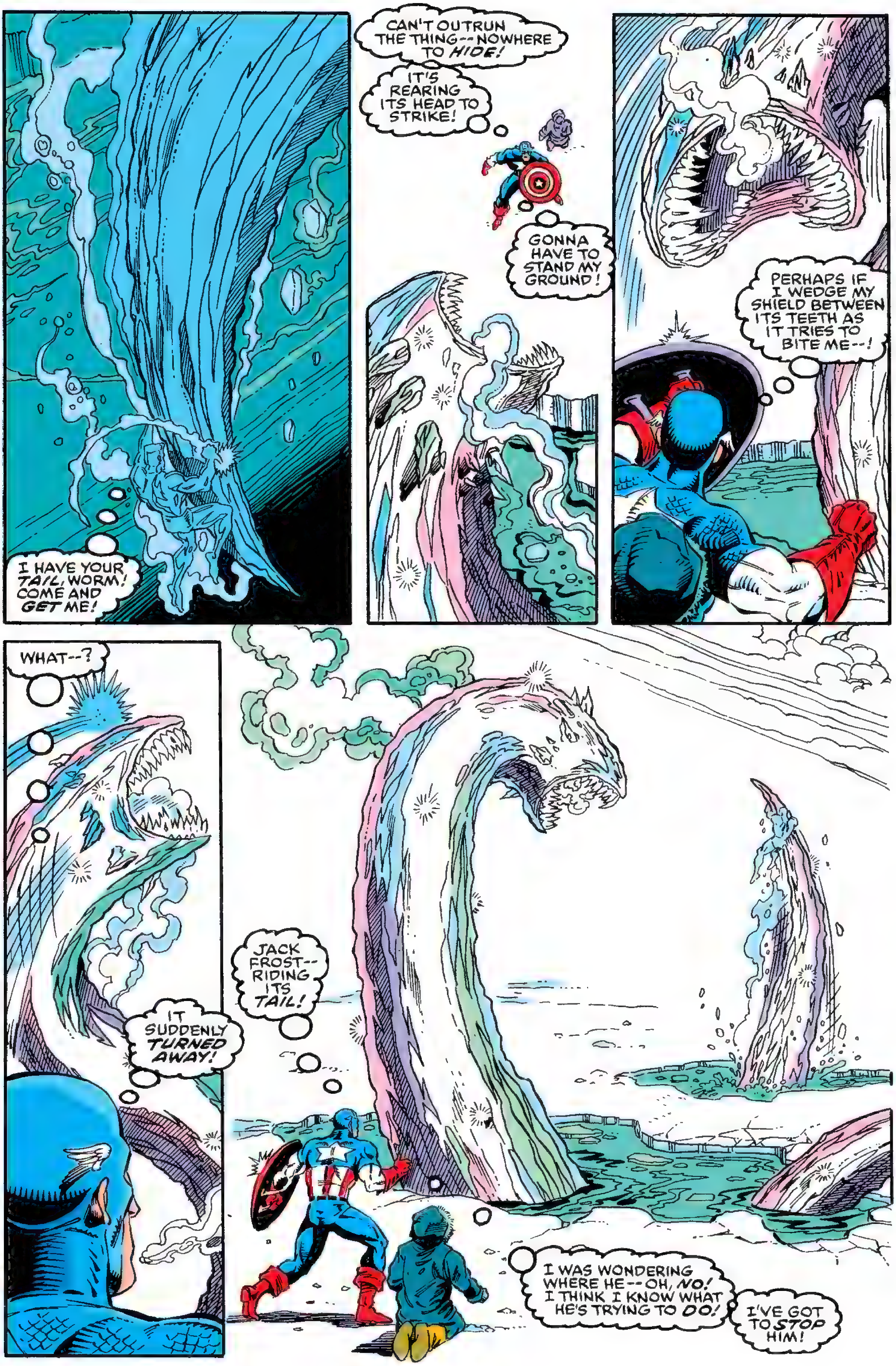

"DARK... COLD... SILENT.
"I'M... ALIVE?
"SO PEACEFUL HERE. FREE OF ALL CONCERN, ALL CONFLICT...
"WAIT-- WHAT'S THAT?--TWO FIGURES COMING TOWARD ME! THEY'RE FIGHTING... BUT WHY--?
"IT'S COMING BACK TO ME. THIS HAS HAPPENED ONCE BEFORE...
"LONG, LONG AGO...
HHHHHHH!
BUCKY! BUCKY-- LOOK OUT!
NO, WAIT--
--YOU'RE NOT BUCKY--YOU'RE NOT DENNIS, EITHER ...YOU'RE...
JACK FROST. WE'VE MET BEFORE.
YES... BACK DURING THE WAR. YOU WERE WITH THE LIBERTY LEGION...
WHAT'S... HAPPENED? WHERE--?
YOU REVIVED ME, CAPTAIN. YOUR BODY WARMTH WAS JUST ENOUGH TO JAR ME OUT OF THE STATE OF SUSPENDED ANIMATION I WAS IN IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST.
THEN, USING YOUR SHIELD, I RIPPED THROUGH THE WORM'S BELLY AND PULLED US FREE.

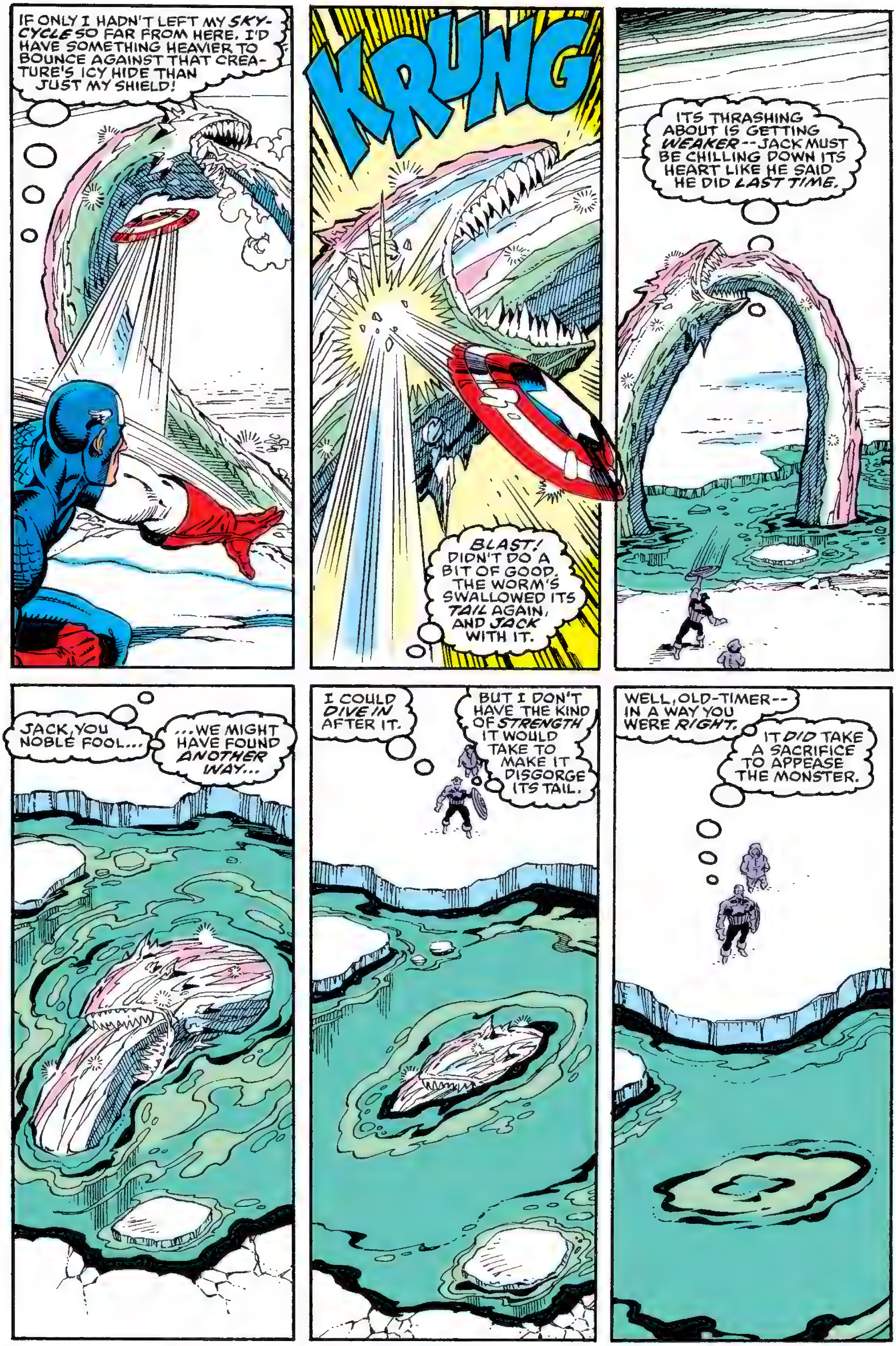

WHAT *IS* THAT THING ANYWAY?
IT IS THE *ICE WORM*, THAT'S ALL I KNOW.
HOW DID YOU GET TRAPPED *INSIDE* IT?
AFTER THE END OF THE WAR-- HOWEVER LONG AGO *THAT* WAS-- I MADE MY WAY UP NORTH, HOPING TO FIND OUT WHO I WAS OR WHERE I'D COME FROM--
--MY EARLIEST MEMORY IS WALKING THESE FROZEN PLAINS ALONE AS A *YOUNG CHILD*--
--BUT INSTEAD I FOUND THE *WORM*.
IT ATTACKED ME. I GRABBED ITS *TAIL* AND WOULDN'T LET GO. TO SWALLOW *ME* IT HAD TO SWALLOW *ITSELF*. IT DID.
ONCE INSIDE, I USED MY MASTERY OVER THE *COLD* TO FREEZE THE *WORM'S HEART* TO THE POINT OF ABSOLUTE STILLNESS, BUT AT THE EXPENSE OF FREEZING *MYSELF* AS WELL.
I'VE BEEN THERE *EVER SINCE*. HOW LONG *HAS* IT BEEN, BY THE WAY?
ABOUT 45 YEARS. IT'S 1991.
SO IT *WASN'T* D-MAN INSIDE THE WORM AT ALL, IT WAS *HIM*.
WHERE IS THE WORM RIGHT NOW?
THE TEAR I MADE IN ITS STOMACH HURT IT. IT DOVE UNDER THE *ICE SHELF*, I IMAGINE, TO LICK ITS WOUNDS.
IT GAVE ME THE BREATHER I NEEDED TO BUILD THIS LITTLE *SHELTER* AND SLOWLY ABSORB THE *COLDNESS* THAT HAD SHUT DOWN YOUR SYSTEM.
BUT I FEAR THAT ANY *MINUTE* NOW, THE ICE WORM WILL--
KRRRRRARR
SPEAKING OF THE DEVIL...

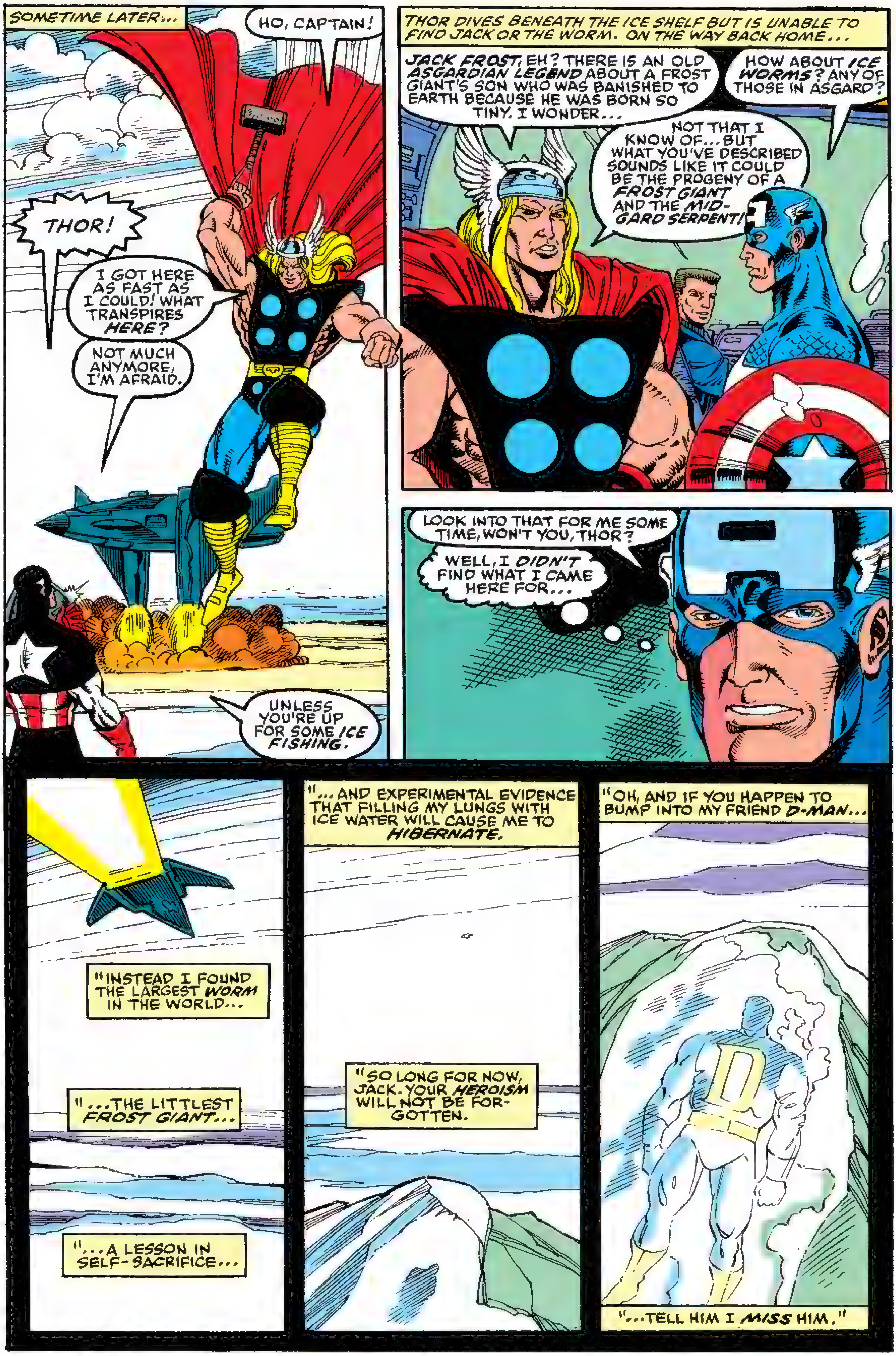

IT'S *BACK* ALL RIGHT.
WAIT A MINUTE-- THERE BEFORE IT, KNEELING--!
MISTER, *GET AWAY* FROM THERE! THAT CREATURE'S LIABLE TO *EAT* YOU!
<O MIGHTY LURKER BENEATH THE ICE--I OFFER MYSELF TO YOU TO ASSUAGE YOUR TERRIBLE *WRATH!*>
IT SEES HIM--IT'S REARING ITS HEAD TO *STRIKE*--
--I'LL TRY TO GET ITS *ATTENTION!*
WHTTT
NICE SHOT.
BLAST! I WISH *THOR* WOULD GET HERE!


HOP ON, CAPTAIN!
RIGHT *BEHIND* YOU, JACK! YOU KEEP THE *WORM* BUSY--I'LL GET THAT MAN TO *SAFETY!*
JUST WHAT *I* WAS GOING TO SAY!
KRAAK
WHOAAA!
WHAT--? IT'S *TAIL!*
DON'T FRET, CAPTAIN -- I'LL MAKE YOU A *SLIDE!*
THE WORM DOESN'T HAVE *EYES*--
--BUT A SUDDEN *SNOW-STORM*--
--MAY PLAY HOB WITH ITS *EARS!*
COME *ON*, OLD TIMER-- WE'RE GETTING YOU *OUT OF HERE!*
<NO--*UNHAND* ME! I MUST *DIE* SO THAT MY TRIBE MIGHT *LIVE!*>


DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HE'S SAYING BUT HIS INTENT SEEMS CLEAR ENOUGH.
SO DO I RESPECT HIS CONVICTIONS--
--OR SAVE HIS LIFE?
SAVE HIS LIFE.
< NO! NO! >
CONVICTIONS MAY CHANGE-- DEATH IS PERMANENT.
WHRAK
THE WORM IS AS POWERFUL AS EVER. THE ONLY WAY TO DEFEAT HIM--
--MAY WELL BE THE WAY I DEFEATED HIM LAST TIME!
SPLOOCE
CAPTAIN AMERICA WOULD NOT APPROVE.
HENCE I SHALL GIVE HIM NO SAY IN THE MATTER.


I HAVE YOUR *TAIL*, WORM! COME AND *GET* ME!
CAN'T OUTRUN THE THING--NOWHERE TO *HIDE!*
IT'S REARING ITS HEAD TO STRIKE!
GONNA HAVE TO STAND MY GROUND!
PERHAPS IF I WEDGE MY SHIELD BETWEEN ITS TEETH AS IT TRIES TO BITE ME--!
WHAT--?
IT SUDDENLY *TURNED AWAY!*
JACK FROST--RIDING ITS *TAIL!*
I WAS WONDERING WHERE HE--OH, *NO!* I THINK I KNOW WHAT HE'S TRYING TO *DO!*
I'VE GOT TO *STOP* HIM!


IF ONLY I HADN'T LEFT MY SKY-CYCLE SO FAR FROM HERE, I'D HAVE SOMETHING HEAVIER TO BOUNCE AGAINST THAT CREATURE'S ICY HIDE THAN JUST MY SHIELD!
KRUNG
BLAST! DIDN'T DO A BIT OF GOOD. THE WORM'S SWALLOWED ITS TAIL AGAIN, AND JACK WITH IT.
ITS THRASHING ABOUT IS GETTING WEAKER--JACK MUST BE CHILLING DOWN ITS HEART LIKE HE SAID HE DID LAST TIME.
JACK, YOU NOBLE FOOL...
...WE MIGHT HAVE FOUND ANOTHER WAY...
I COULD DIVE IN AFTER IT.
BUT I DON'T HAVE THE KIND OF STRENGTH IT WOULD TAKE TO MAKE IT DISGORGE ITS TAIL.
WELL, OLD-TIMER-- IN A WAY YOU WERE RIGHT.
IT DID TAKE A SACRIFICE TO APPEASE THE MONSTER.


SOMETIME LATER...
HO, CAPTAIN!
THOR!
I GOT HERE AS FAST AS I COULD! WHAT TRANSPIRES HERE?
NOT MUCH ANYMORE, I'M AFRAID.
UNLESS YOU'RE UP FOR SOME ICE FISHING.
THOR DIVES BENEATH THE ICE SHELF BUT IS UNABLE TO FIND JACK OR THE WORM. ON THE WAY BACK HOME...
JACK FROST, EH? THERE IS AN OLD ASGARDIAN LEGEND ABOUT A FROST GIANT'S SON WHO WAS BANISHED TO EARTH BECAUSE HE WAS BORN SO TINY. I WONDER...
HOW ABOUT ICE WORMS? ANY OF THOSE IN ASGARD?
NOT THAT I KNOW OF... BUT WHAT YOU'VE DESCRIBED SOUNDS LIKE IT COULD BE THE PROGENY OF A FROST GIANT AND THE MIDGARD SERPENT!
LOOK INTO THAT FOR ME SOME TIME, WON'T YOU, THOR?
WELL, I DIDN'T FIND WHAT I CAME HERE FOR...
"INSTEAD I FOUND THE LARGEST WORM IN THE WORLD...
"...THE LITTLEST FROST GIANT...
"...A LESSON IN SELF-SACRIFICE...
"...AND EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE THAT FILLING MY LUNGS WITH ICE WATER WILL CAUSE ME TO HIBERNATE.
"SO LONG FOR NOW, JACK. YOUR HEROISM WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN.
"OH, AND IF YOU HAPPEN TO BUMP INTO MY FRIEND D-MAN...
"...TELL HIM I MISS HIM."

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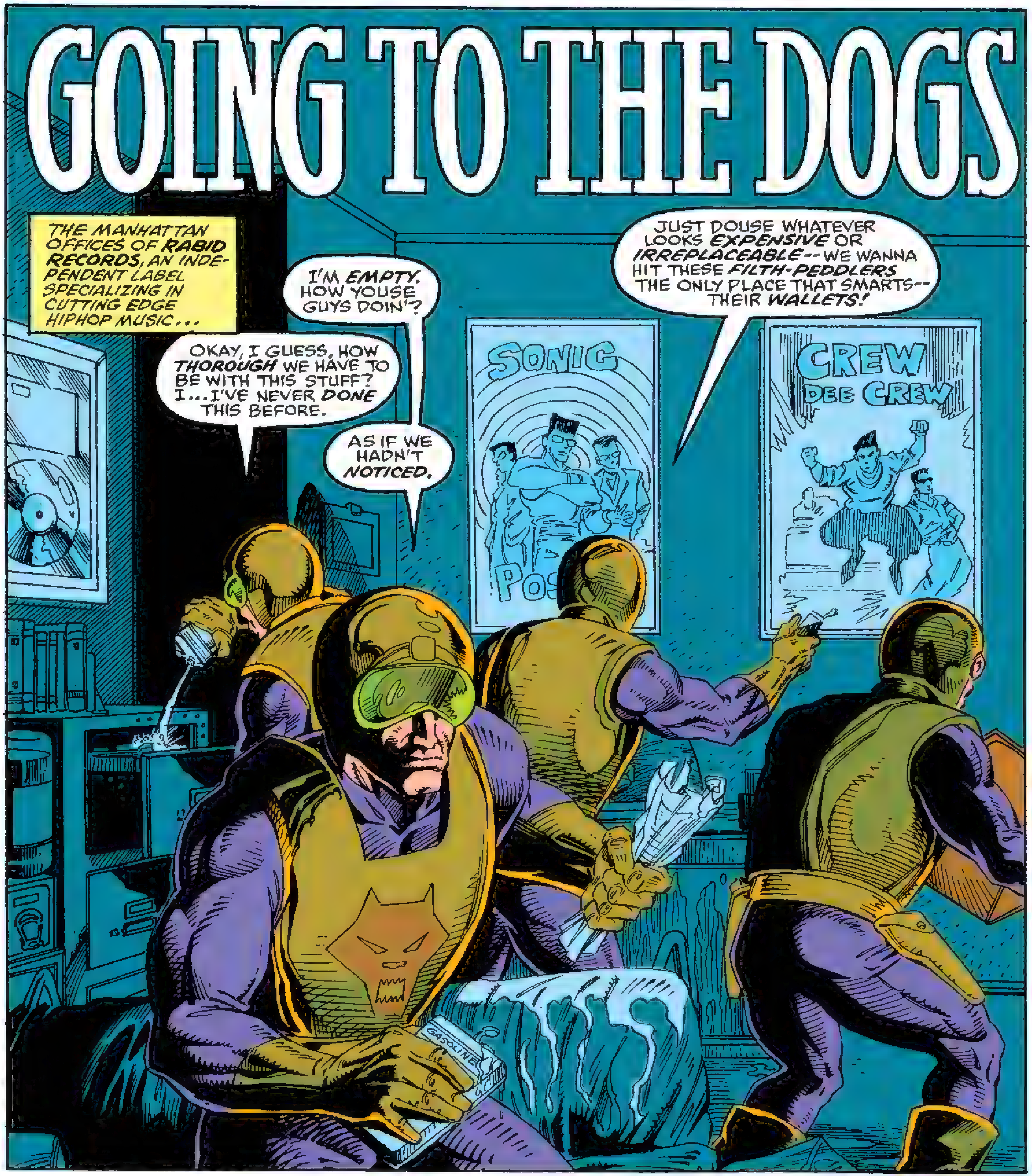
IT HAD TO HAPPEN! CAP WAGES WAR WITH THE
WATCHDOGS!
TM

STEVE ROGERS . . . BORN IN THE U.S.A., RAISED TO CHERISH THE IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY, ENDOWED WITH A SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE, AND DRIVEN TO BE THE MOST CAPABLE COMBATANT IN THE WORLD. NOW AS BOTH LONE CRUSADER AND LEADER OF THE RENOWNED AVENGERS, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM!

STAN LEE PRESENTS: CAPTAIN AMERICA!


GOING TO THE DOGS
THE MANHATTAN OFFICES OF RABID RECORDS, AN INDEPENDENT LABEL SPECIALIZING IN CUTTING EDGE HIPHOP MUSIC...
I'M EMPTY. HOW YOUSE GUYS DOIN'?
OKAY, I GUESS. HOW THOROUGH WE HAVE TO BE WITH THIS STUFF? I...I'VE NEVER DONE THIS BEFORE.
AS IF WE HADN'T NOTICED.
JUST DOUSE WHATEVER LOOKS EXPENSIVE OR IRREPLACEABLE--WE WANNA HIT THESE FILTH-PEDDLERS THE ONLY PLACE THAT SMARTS--THEIR WALLETS!
SONIC
POS
CREW DEE CREW
GASOLINE

MARK GRUENWALD WRITER · RON LIM PENCILER · DANNY BULANADI INKER · JOE ROSEN LETTERER · MAX SCHEELE COLORIST · RALPH MACCHIO EDITOR · TOM DEFALCO ED IN CHIEF

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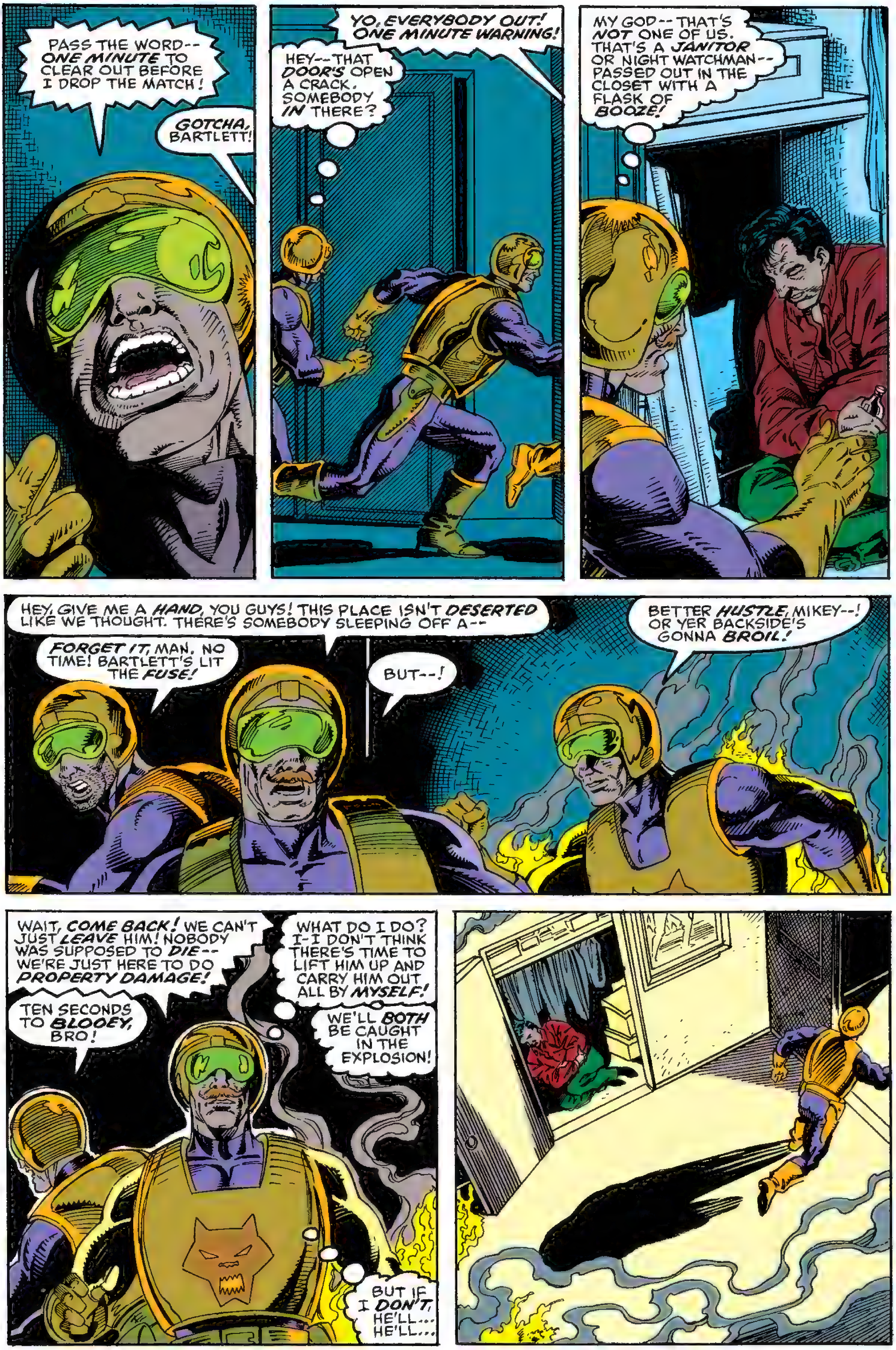
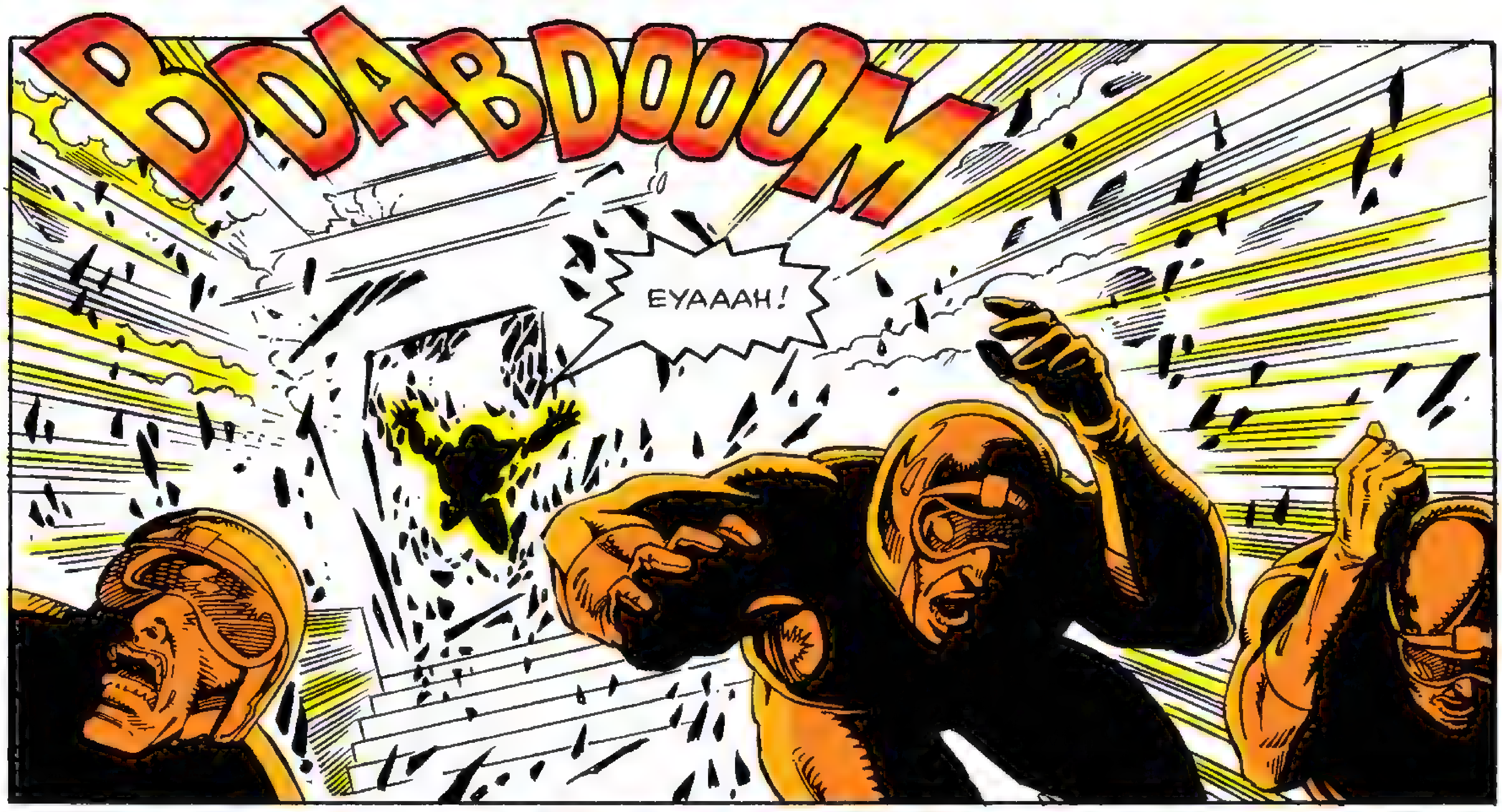
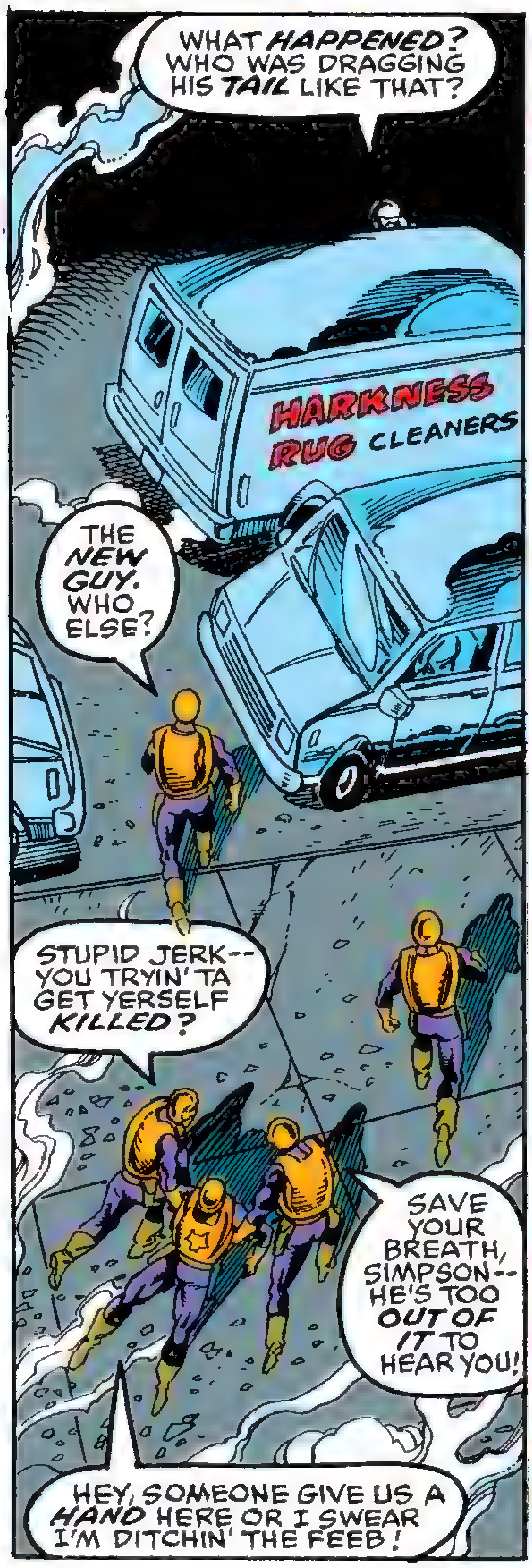
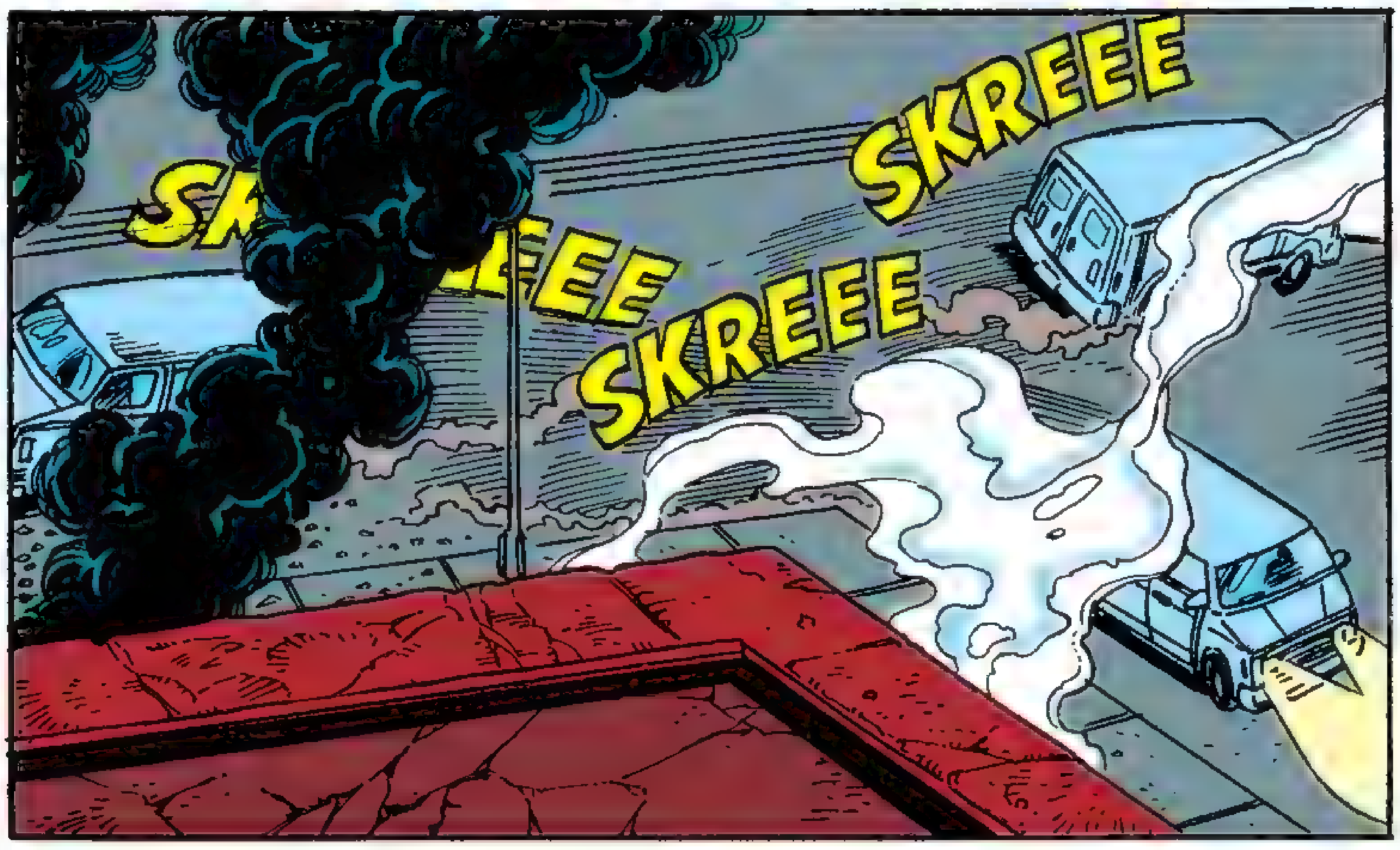
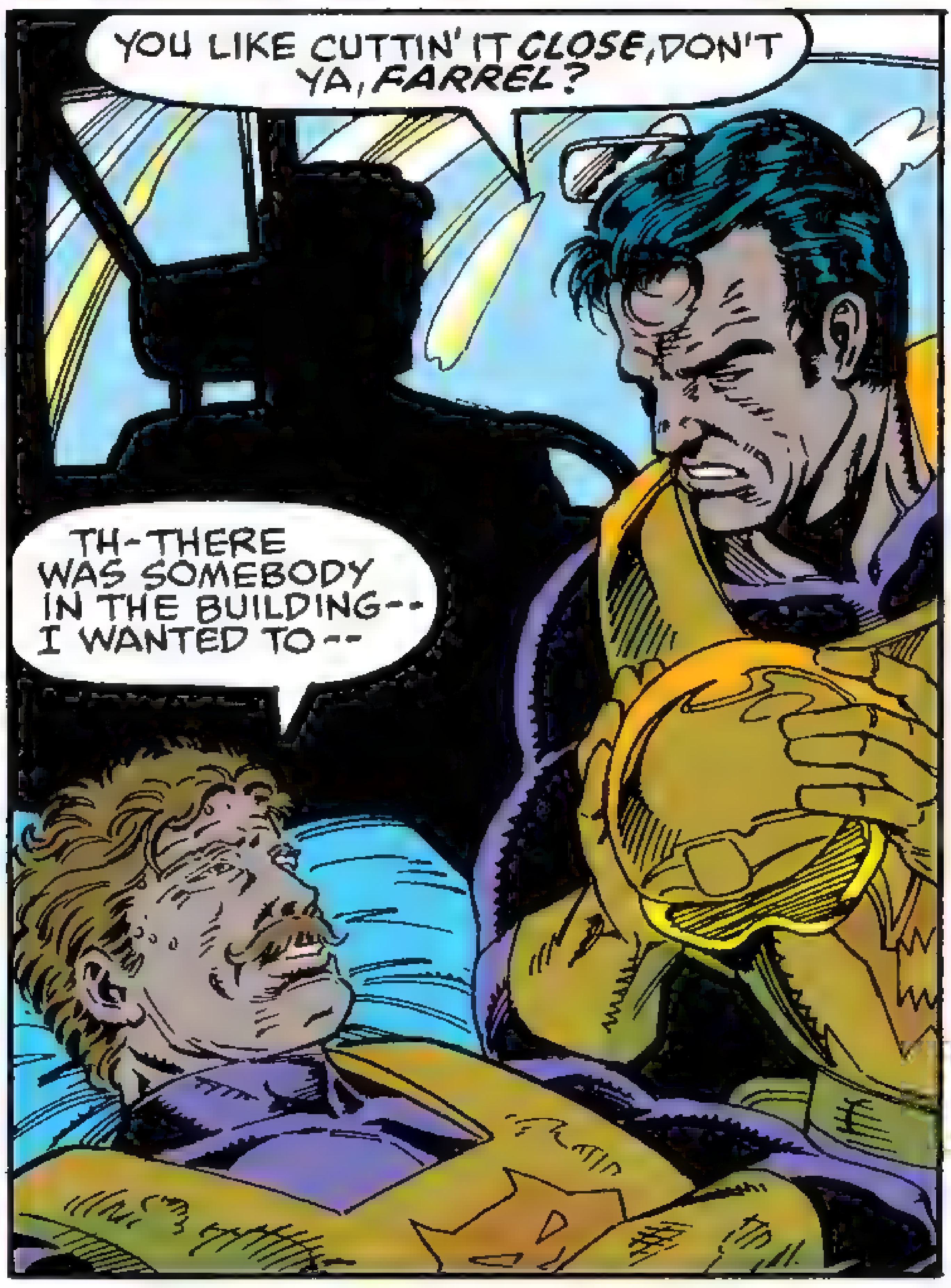
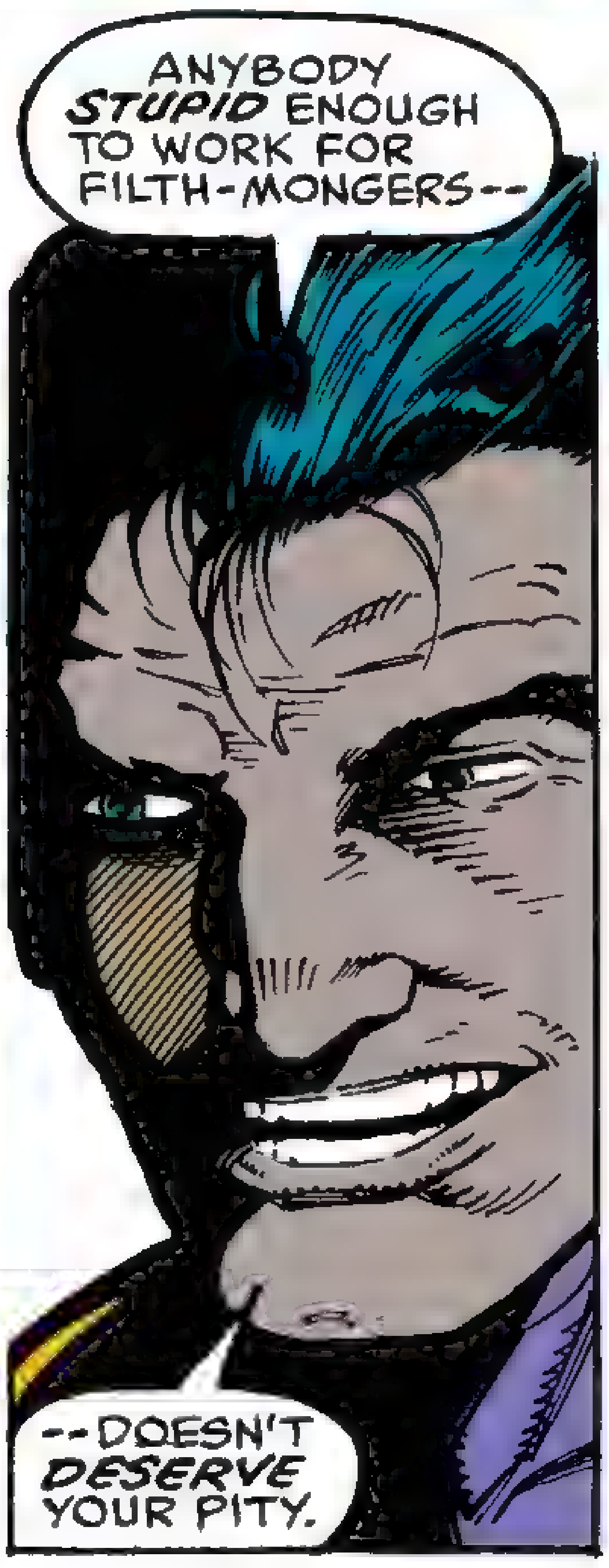

PASS THE WORD-- ONE MINUTE TO CLEAR OUT BEFORE I DROP THE MATCH!
GOTCHA, BARTLETT!
YO, EVERYBODY OUT! ONE MINUTE WARNING!
HEY--THAT DOOR'S OPEN A CRACK. SOMEBODY IN THERE?
MY GOD--THAT'S NOT ONE OF US. THAT'S A JANITOR OR NIGHT WATCHMAN-- PASSED OUT IN THE CLOSET WITH A FLASK OF BOOZE!
HEY, GIVE ME A HAND, YOU GUYS! THIS PLACE ISN'T DESERTED LIKE WE THOUGHT. THERE'S SOMEBODY SLEEPING OFF A--
FORGET IT, MAN. NO TIME! BARTLETT'S LIT THE FUSE!
BUT--!
BETTER HUSTLE, MIKEY--! OR YER BACKSIDE'S GONNA BROIL!
WAIT, COME BACK! WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE HIM! NOBODY WAS SUPPOSED TO DIE-- WE'RE JUST HERE TO DO PROPERTY DAMAGE!
TEN SECONDS TO BLOOEY, BRO!
WHAT DO I DO? I-I DON'T THINK THERE'S TIME TO LIFT HIM UP AND CARRY HIM OUT ALL BY MYSELF!
WE'LL BOTH BE CAUGHT IN THE EXPLOSION!
BUT IF I DON'T, HE'LL... HE'LL...

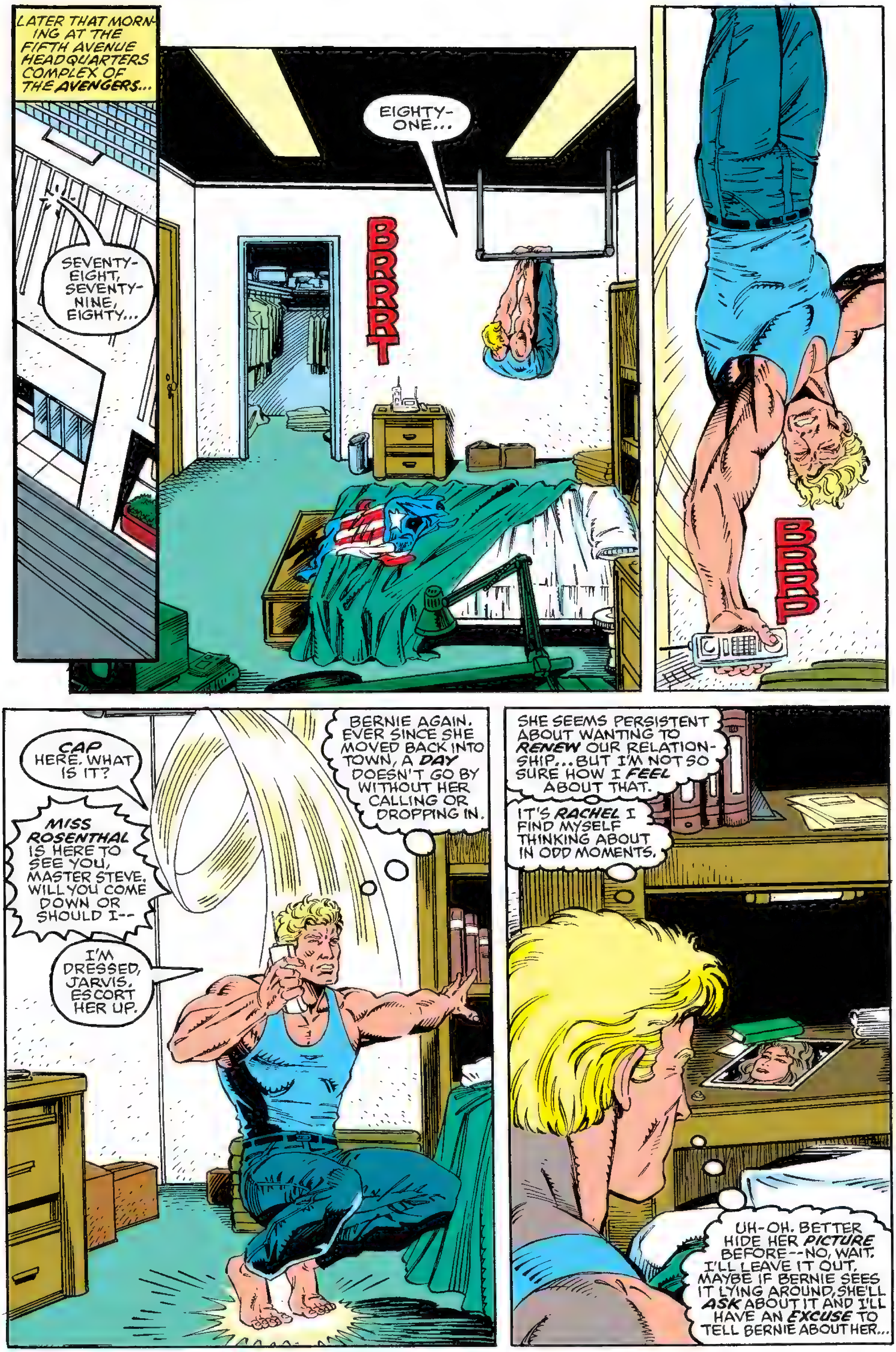

BOOOBDOOOM
EYAAAH!

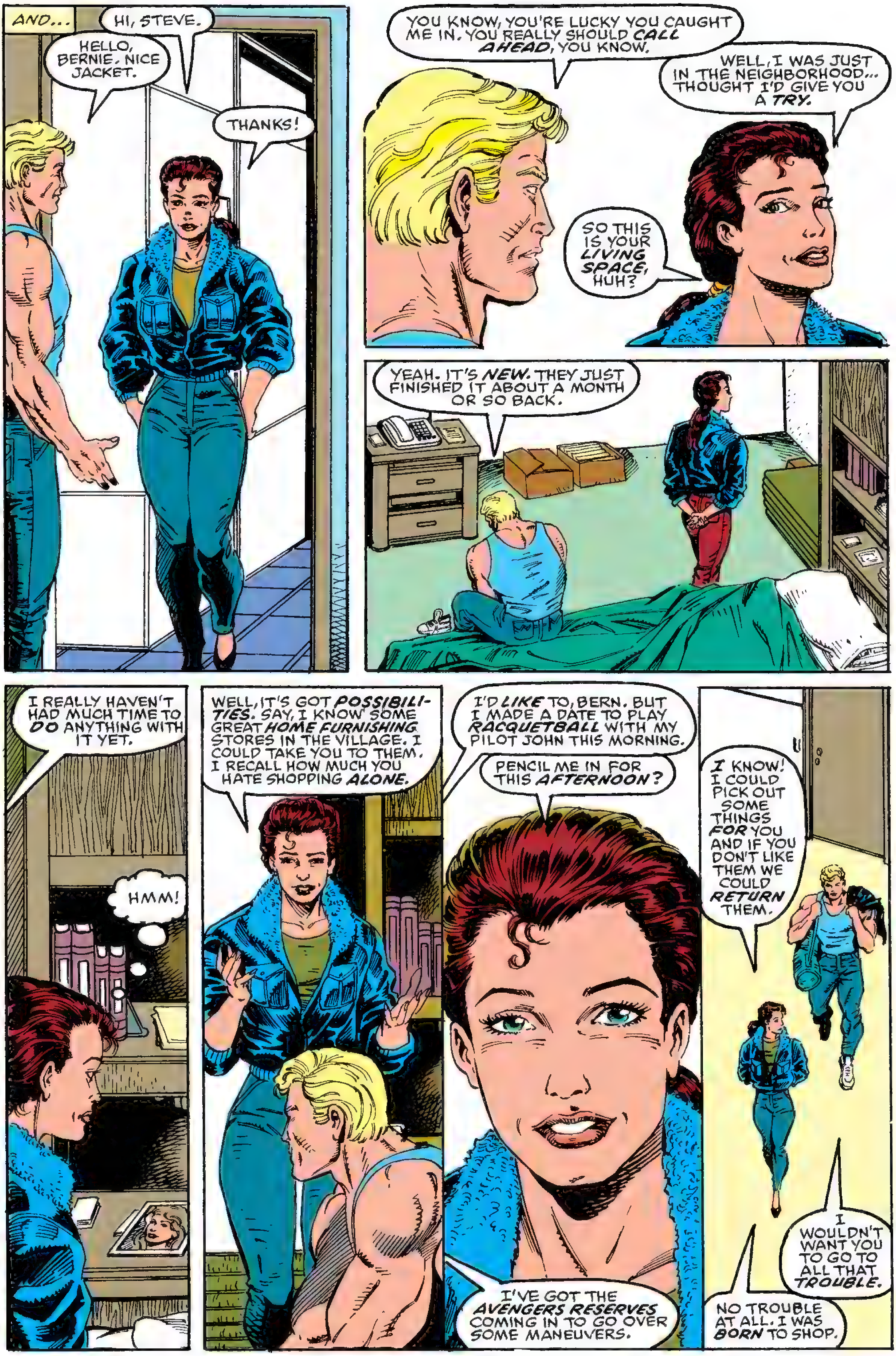

WHAT *HAPPENED*? WHO WAS DRAGGING HIS *TAIL* LIKE THAT?
HARKNESS RUG CLEANERS
THE *NEW GUY*. WHO ELSE?
STUPID JERK-- YOU TRYIN' TA GET YERSELF *KILLED*?
SAVE YOUR BREATH, SIMPSON-- HE'S TOO *OUT OF IT* TO HEAR YOU!
HEY, SOMEONE GIVE US A *HAND* HERE OR I SWEAR I'M DITCHIN' THE FEEB!

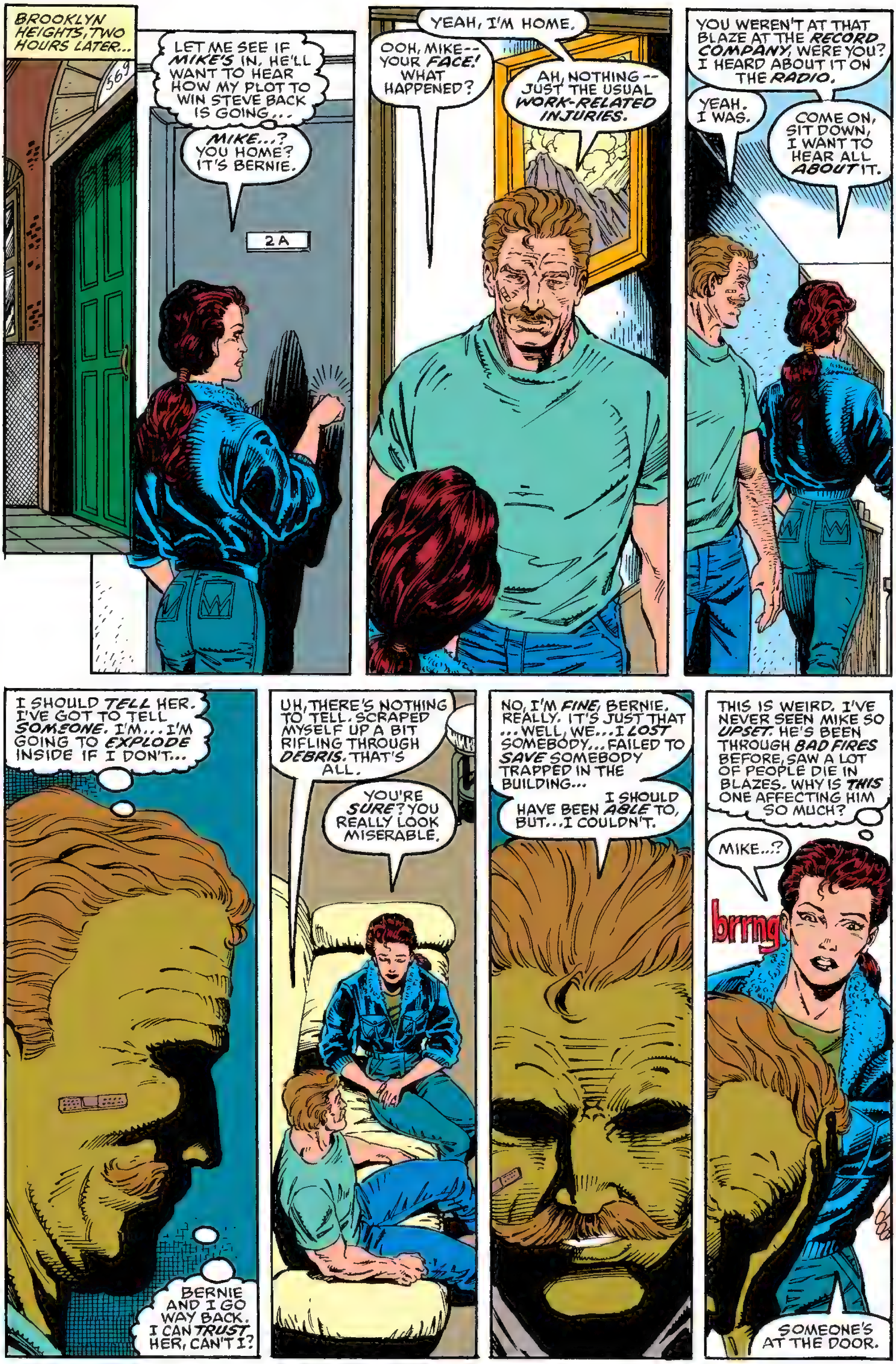

SKREEE
SKREEE

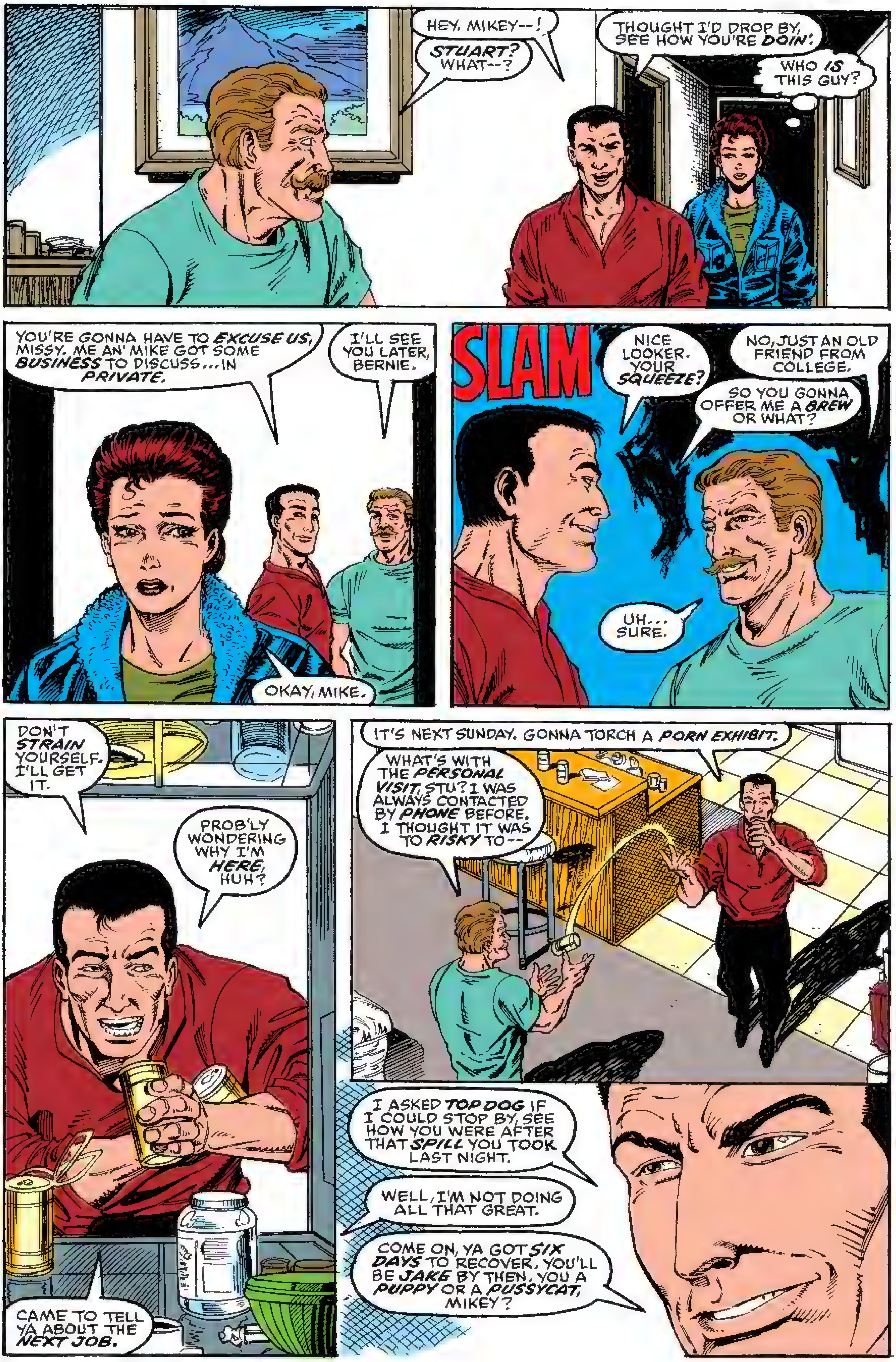

YOU LIKE CUTTIN' IT *CLOSE*, DON'T YA, *FARREL*?
TH-THERE WAS SOMEBODY IN THE BUILDING-- I WANTED TO--

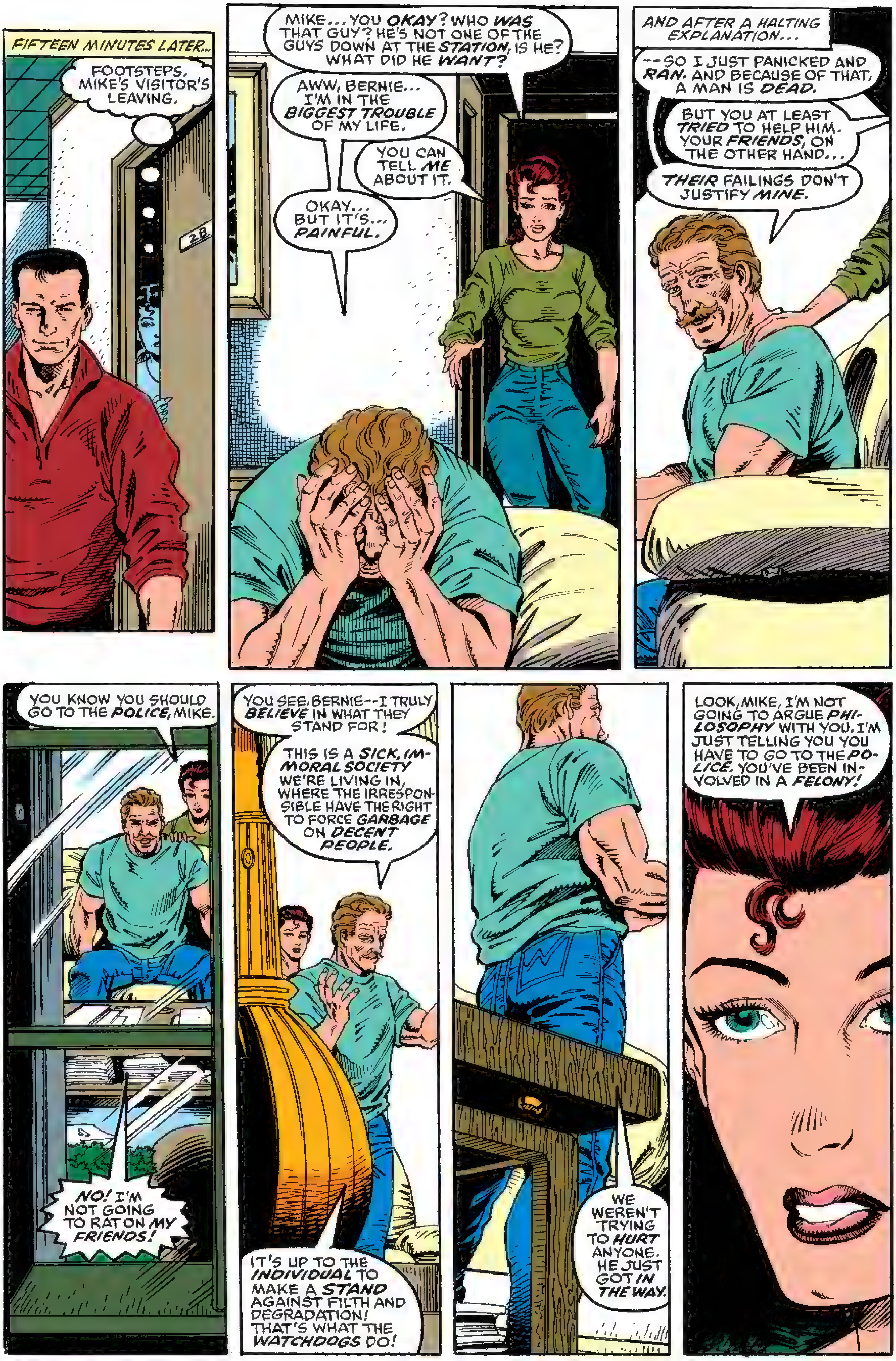

ANYBODY *STUPID* ENOUGH TO WORK FOR FILTH-MONGERS--
--DOESN'T *DESERVE* YOUR PITY.

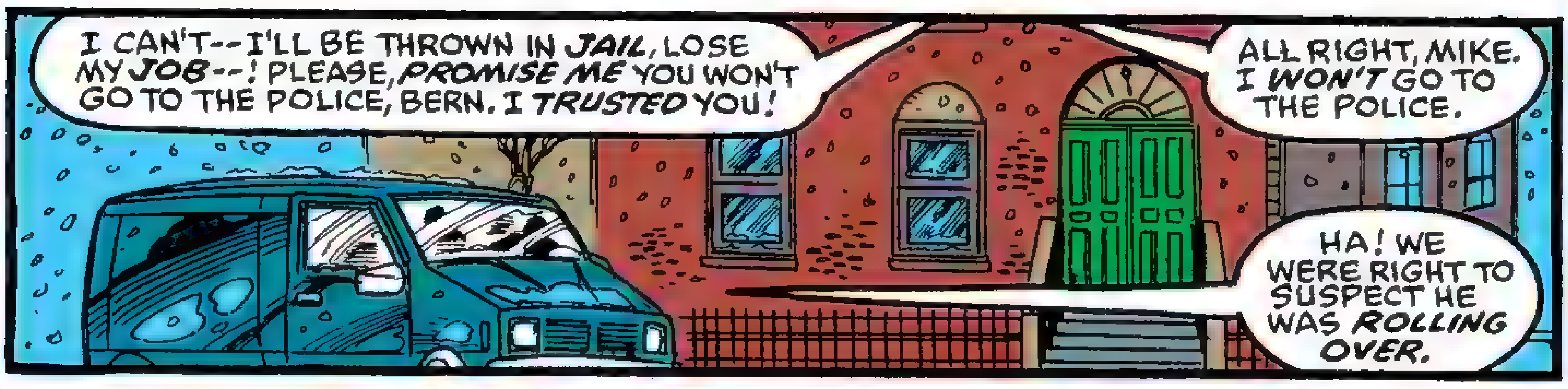

LATER THAT MORNING AT THE FIFTH AVENUE HEADQUARTERS COMPLEX OF THE AVENGERS...
SEVENTY-EIGHT, SEVENTY-NINE, EIGHTY...
EIGHTY-ONE...
BRRRRT
BRRRP
CAP HERE. WHAT IS IT?
MISS ROSENTHAL IS HERE TO SEE YOU, MASTER STEVE. WILL YOU COME DOWN OR SHOULD I--
I'M DRESSED, JARVIS. ESCORT HER UP.
BERNIE AGAIN. EVER SINCE SHE MOVED BACK INTO TOWN, A DAY DOESN'T GO BY WITHOUT HER CALLING OR DROPPING IN.
SHE SEEMS PERSISTENT ABOUT WANTING TO RENEW OUR RELATIONSHIP... BUT I'M NOT SO SURE HOW I FEEL ABOUT THAT.
IT'S RACHEL I FIND MYSELF THINKING ABOUT IN ODD MOMENTS.
UH-OH. BETTER HIDE HER PICTURE BEFORE--NO, WAIT. I'LL LEAVE IT OUT. MAYBE IF BERNIE SEES IT LYING AROUND, SHE'LL ASK ABOUT IT AND I'LL HAVE AN EXCUSE TO TELL BERNIE ABOUT HER...

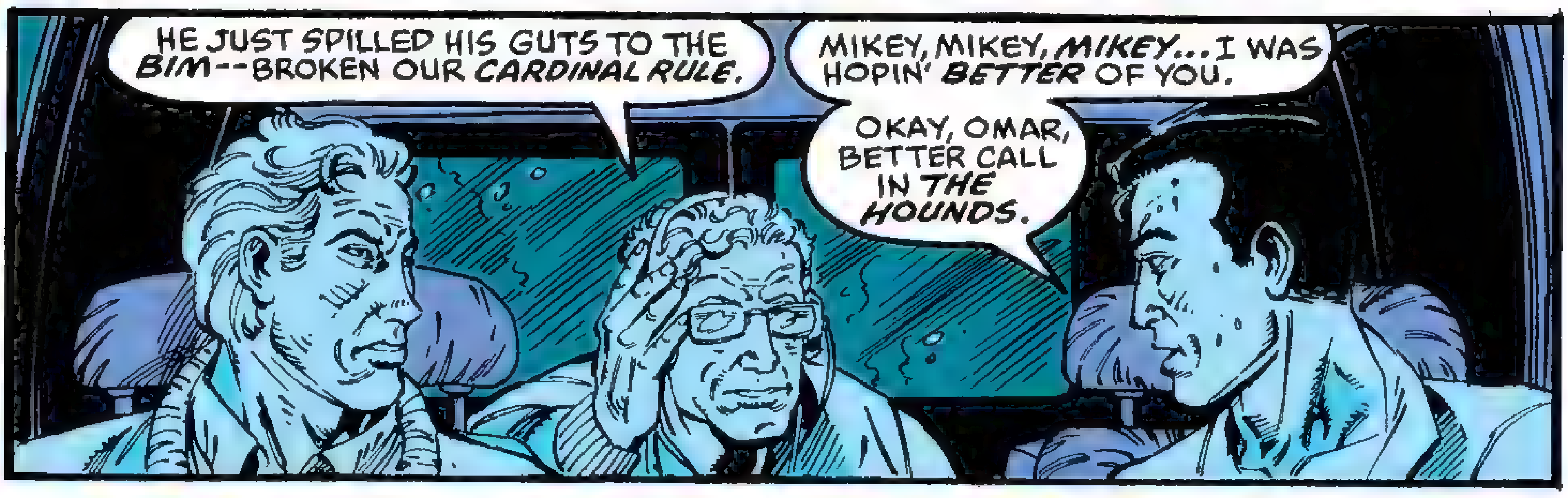

AND...
HI, STEVE.
HELLO, BERNIE. NICE JACKET.
THANKS!
YOU KNOW, YOU'RE LUCKY YOU CAUGHT ME IN. YOU REALLY SHOULD *CALL AHEAD*, YOU KNOW.
WELL, I WAS JUST IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD... THOUGHT I'D GIVE YOU A *TRY*.
SO THIS IS YOUR *LIVING SPACE*, HUH?
YEAH. IT'S *NEW*. THEY JUST FINISHED IT ABOUT A MONTH OR SO BACK.
I REALLY HAVEN'T HAD MUCH TIME TO *DO* ANYTHING WITH IT YET.
HMM!
WELL, IT'S GOT *POSSIBILITIES*. SAY, I KNOW SOME GREAT *HOME FURNISHING* STORES IN THE VILLAGE. I COULD TAKE YOU TO THEM. I RECALL HOW MUCH YOU HATE SHOPPING *ALONE*.
I'D *LIKE* TO, BERN. BUT I MADE A DATE TO PLAY *RACQUETBALL* WITH MY PILOT JOHN THIS MORNING.
PENCIL ME IN FOR THIS *AFTERNOON*?
I'VE GOT THE *AVENGERS RESERVES* COMING IN TO GO OVER SOME MANEUVERS.
I KNOW! I COULD PICK OUT SOME THINGS *FOR* YOU AND IF YOU DON'T LIKE THEM WE COULD *RETURN* THEM.
I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO GO TO ALL THAT *TROUBLE*.
NO TROUBLE AT ALL. I WAS *BORN* TO SHOP.

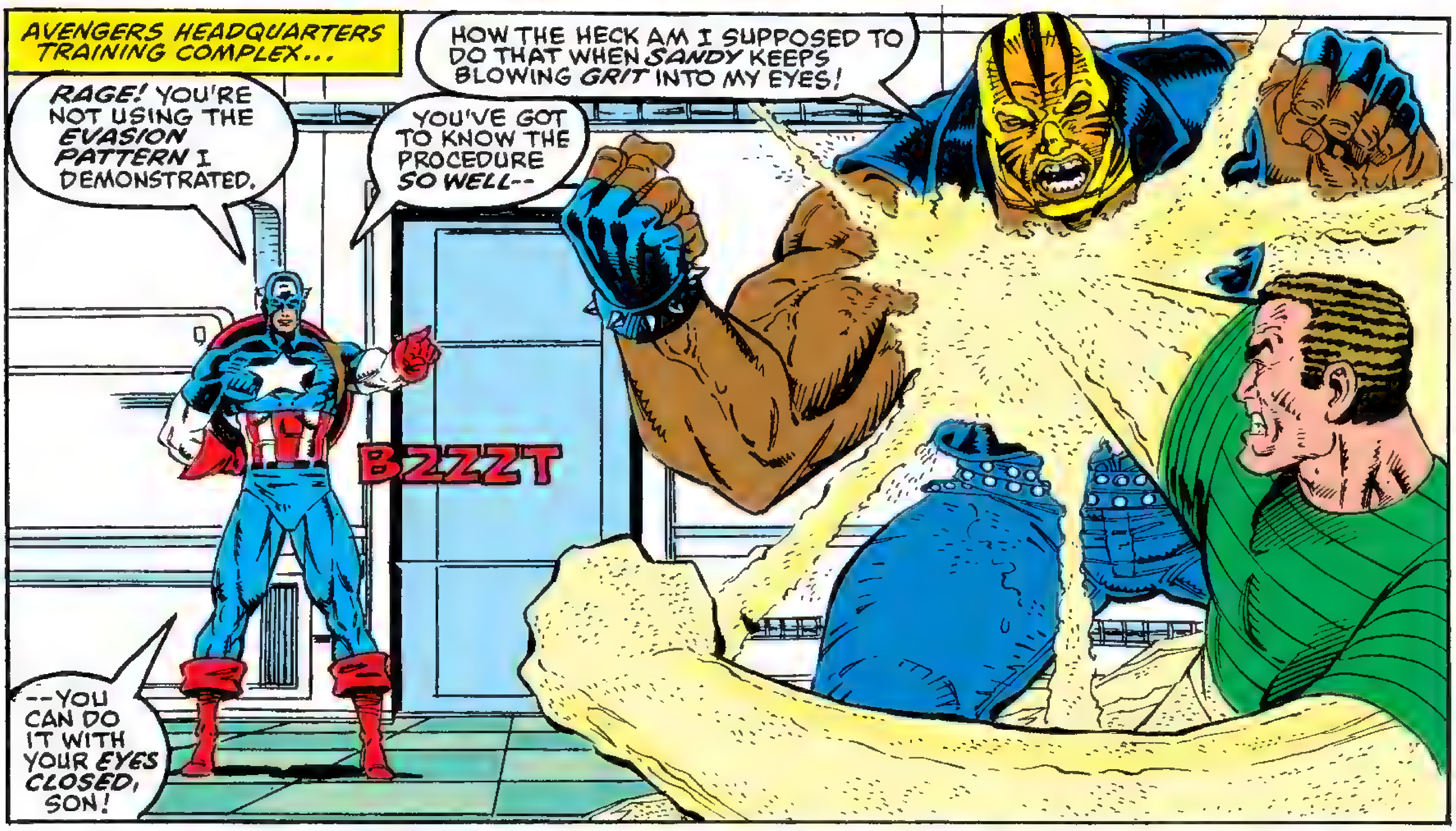

BROOKLYN HEIGHTS, TWO HOURS LATER...
569
LET ME SEE IF MIKE'S IN. HE'LL WANT TO HEAR HOW MY PLOT TO WIN STEVE BACK IS GOING...
MIKE...? YOU HOME? IT'S BERNIE.
2 A
YEAH, I'M HOME.
OOH, MIKE-- YOUR FACE! WHAT HAPPENED?
AH, NOTHING -- JUST THE USUAL WORK-RELATED INJURIES.
YOU WEREN'T AT THAT BLAZE AT THE RECORD COMPANY, WERE YOU? I HEARD ABOUT IT ON THE RADIO.
YEAH. I WAS.
COME ON, SIT DOWN, I WANT TO HEAR ALL ABOUT IT.
I SHOULD TELL HER. I'VE GOT TO TELL SOMEONE. I'M... I'M GOING TO EXPLODE INSIDE IF I DON'T...
BERNIE AND I GO WAY BACK. I CAN TRUST HER, CAN'T I?
UH, THERE'S NOTHING TO TELL. SCRAPED MYSELF UP A BIT RIFLING THROUGH DEBRIS. THAT'S ALL.
YOU'RE SURE? YOU REALLY LOOK MISERABLE.
NO, I'M FINE, BERNIE. REALLY. IT'S JUST THAT ...WELL, WE...I LOST SOMEBODY...FAILED TO SAVE SOMEBODY TRAPPED IN THE BUILDING...
I SHOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO, BUT...I COULDN'T.
THIS IS WEIRD. I'VE NEVER SEEN MIKE SO UPSET. HE'S BEEN THROUGH BAD FIRES BEFORE, SAW A LOT OF PEOPLE DIE IN BLAZES. WHY IS THIS ONE AFFECTING HIM SO MUCH?
MIKE...?
brrng
SOMEONE'S AT THE DOOR.

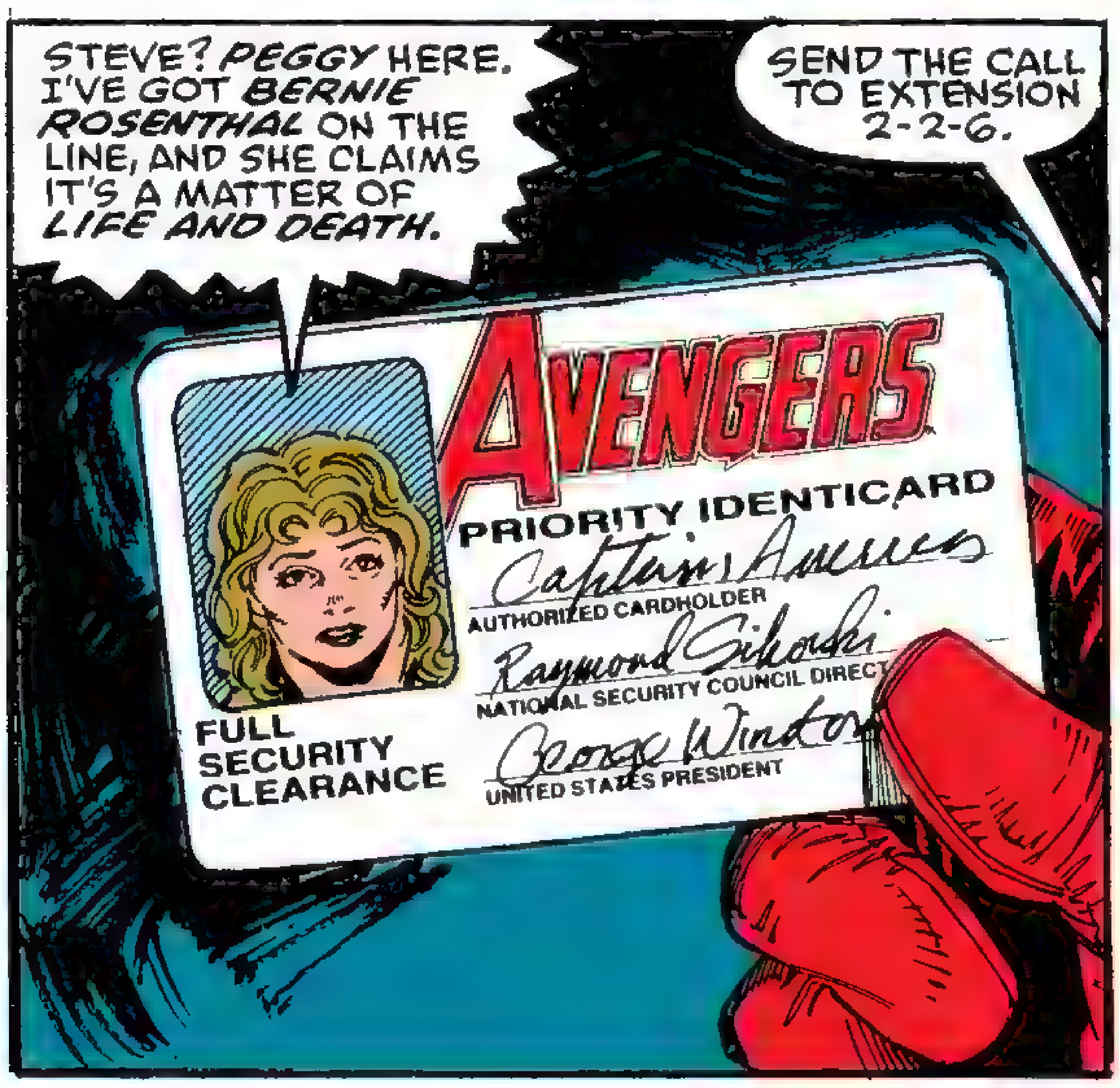

HEY, MIKEY--!
STUART? WHAT--?
THOUGHT I'D DROP BY, SEE HOW YOU'RE DOIN'.
WHO IS THIS GUY?
YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO EXCUSE US, MISSY. ME AN' MIKE GOT SOME BUSINESS TO DISCUSS... IN PRIVATE.
I'LL SEE YOU LATER, BERNIE.
OKAY, MIKE.
SLAM
NICE LOOKER. YOUR SQUEEZE?
NO, JUST AN OLD FRIEND FROM COLLEGE.
SO YOU GONNA OFFER ME A BREW OR WHAT?
UH... SURE.
DON'T STRAIN YOURSELF. I'LL GET IT.
PROB'LY WONDERING WHY I'M HERE, HUH?
CAME TO TELL YA ABOUT THE NEXT JOB.
IT'S NEXT SUNDAY. GONNA TORCH A PORN EXHIBIT.
WHAT'S WITH THE PERSONAL VISIT, STU? I WAS ALWAYS CONTACTED BY PHONE BEFORE. I THOUGHT IT WAS TO RISKY TO--
I ASKED TOP DOG IF I COULD STOP BY, SEE HOW YOU WERE AFTER THAT SPILL YOU TOOK LAST NIGHT.
WELL, I'M NOT DOING ALL THAT GREAT.
COME ON, YA GOT SIX DAYS TO RECOVER. YOU'LL BE JAKE BY THEN. YOU A PUPPY OR A PUSSYCAT, MIKEY?

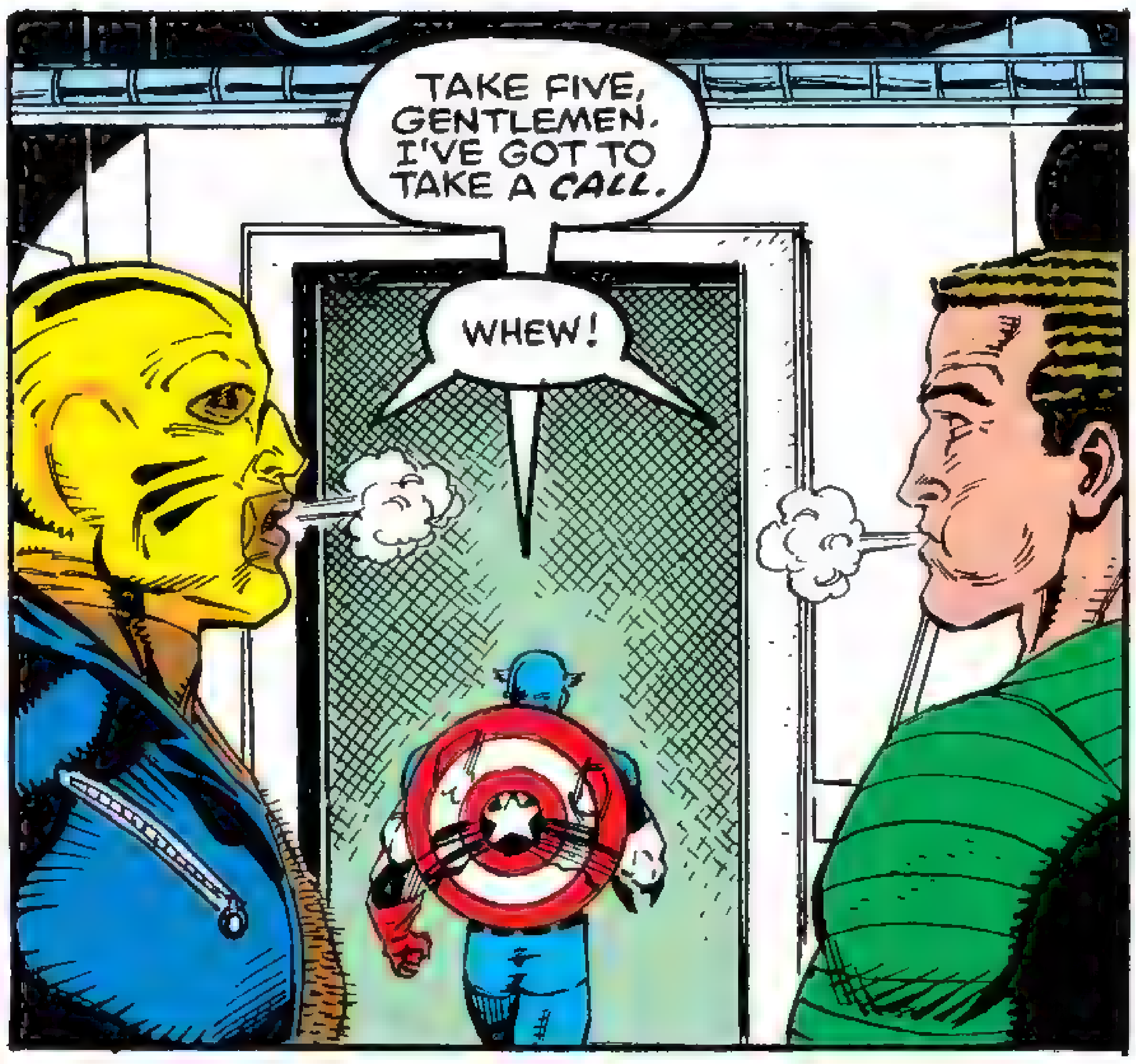

FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER...
FOOTSTEPS. MIKE'S VISITOR'S LEAVING.
28
MIKE... YOU OKAY? WHO WAS THAT GUY? HE'S NOT ONE OF THE GUYS DOWN AT THE STATION, IS HE? WHAT DID HE WANT?
AWW, BERNIE... I'M IN THE BIGGEST TROUBLE OF MY LIFE.
YOU CAN TELL ME ABOUT IT.
OKAY... BUT IT'S... PAINFUL.
AND AFTER A HALTING EXPLANATION...
--SO I JUST PANICKED AND RAN. AND BECAUSE OF THAT, A MAN IS DEAD.
BUT YOU AT LEAST TRIED TO HELP HIM. YOUR FRIENDS, ON THE OTHER HAND...
THEIR FAILINGS DON'T JUSTIFY MINE.
YOU KNOW YOU SHOULD GO TO THE POLICE, MIKE.
NO! I'M NOT GOING TO RAT ON MY FRIENDS!
YOU SEE, BERNIE--I TRULY BELIEVE IN WHAT THEY STAND FOR!
THIS IS A SICK, IMMORAL SOCIETY WE'RE LIVING IN, WHERE THE IRRESPONSIBLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO FORCE GARBAGE ON DECENT PEOPLE.
IT'S UP TO THE INDIVIDUAL TO MAKE A STAND AGAINST FILTH AND DEGRADATION! THAT'S WHAT THE WATCHDOGS DO!
WE WEREN'T TRYING TO HURT ANYONE. HE JUST GOT IN THE WAY.
LOOK, MIKE, I'M NOT GOING TO ARGUE PHILOSOPHY WITH YOU. I'M JUST TELLING YOU YOU HAVE TO GO TO THE POLICE. YOU'VE BEEN INVOLVED IN A FELONY!

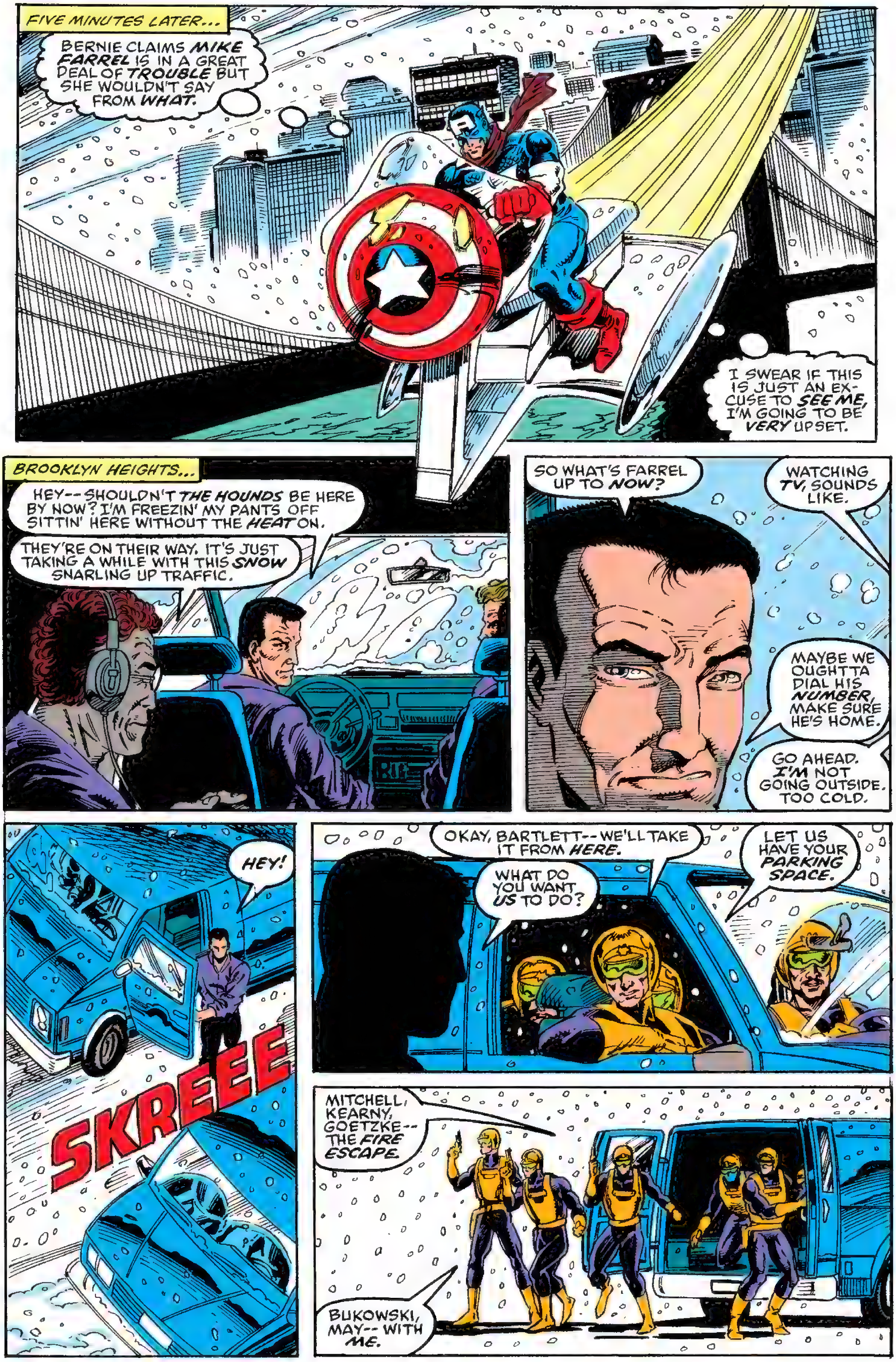

I CAN'T--I'LL BE THROWN IN *JAIL*, LOSE MY *JOB*--! PLEASE, *PROMISE ME* YOU WON'T GO TO THE POLICE, BERN. I *TRUSTED* YOU!
ALL RIGHT, MIKE. I *WON'T* GO TO THE POLICE.
HA! WE WERE RIGHT TO SUSPECT HE WAS *ROLLING OVER*.

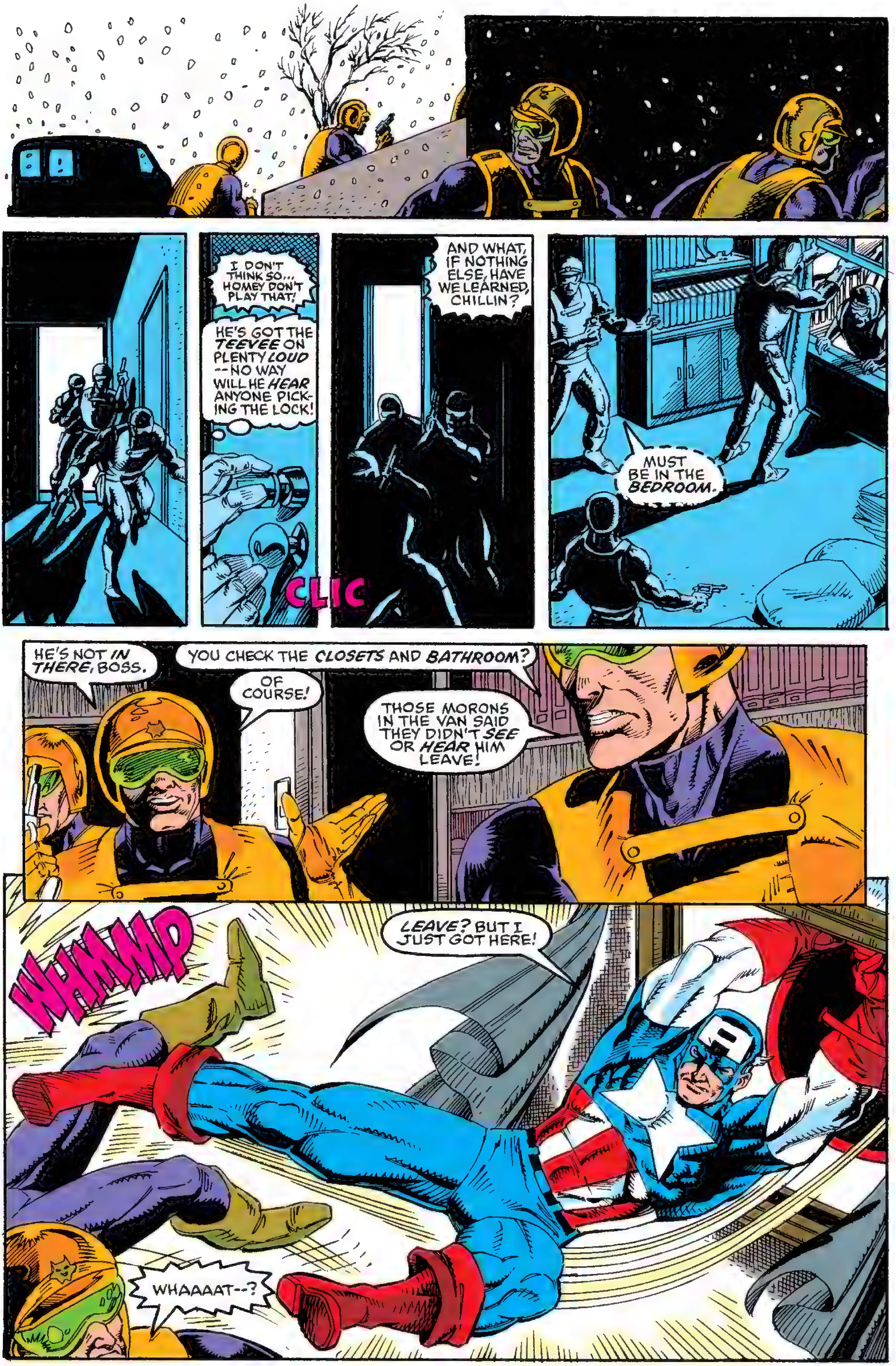

HE JUST SPILLED HIS GUTS TO THE *BIM*--BROKEN OUR *CARDINAL RULE*.
MIKEY, MIKEY, *MIKEY*... I WAS HOPIN' *BETTER* OF YOU.
OKAY, OMAR, BETTER CALL IN *THE HOUNDS*.

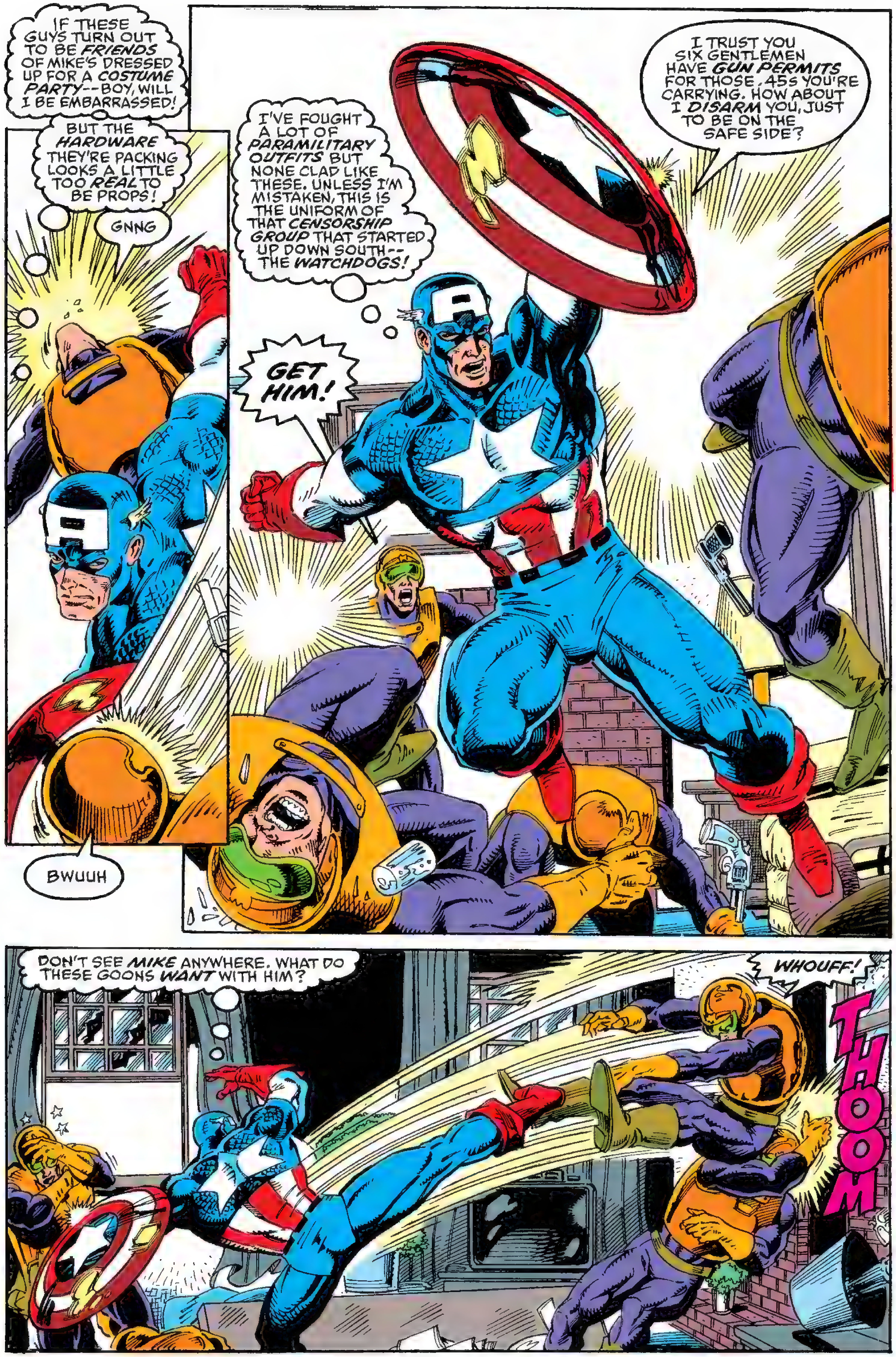

AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS TRAINING COMPLEX...
RAGE! YOU'RE NOT USING THE *EVASION PATTERN* I DEMONSTRATED.
HOW THE HECK AM I SUPPOSED TO DO THAT WHEN *SANDY* KEEPS BLOWING *GRIT* INTO MY EYES!
YOU'VE GOT TO KNOW THE PROCEDURE *SO WELL*--
BZZZT
--YOU CAN DO IT WITH YOUR *EYES CLOSED*, SON!

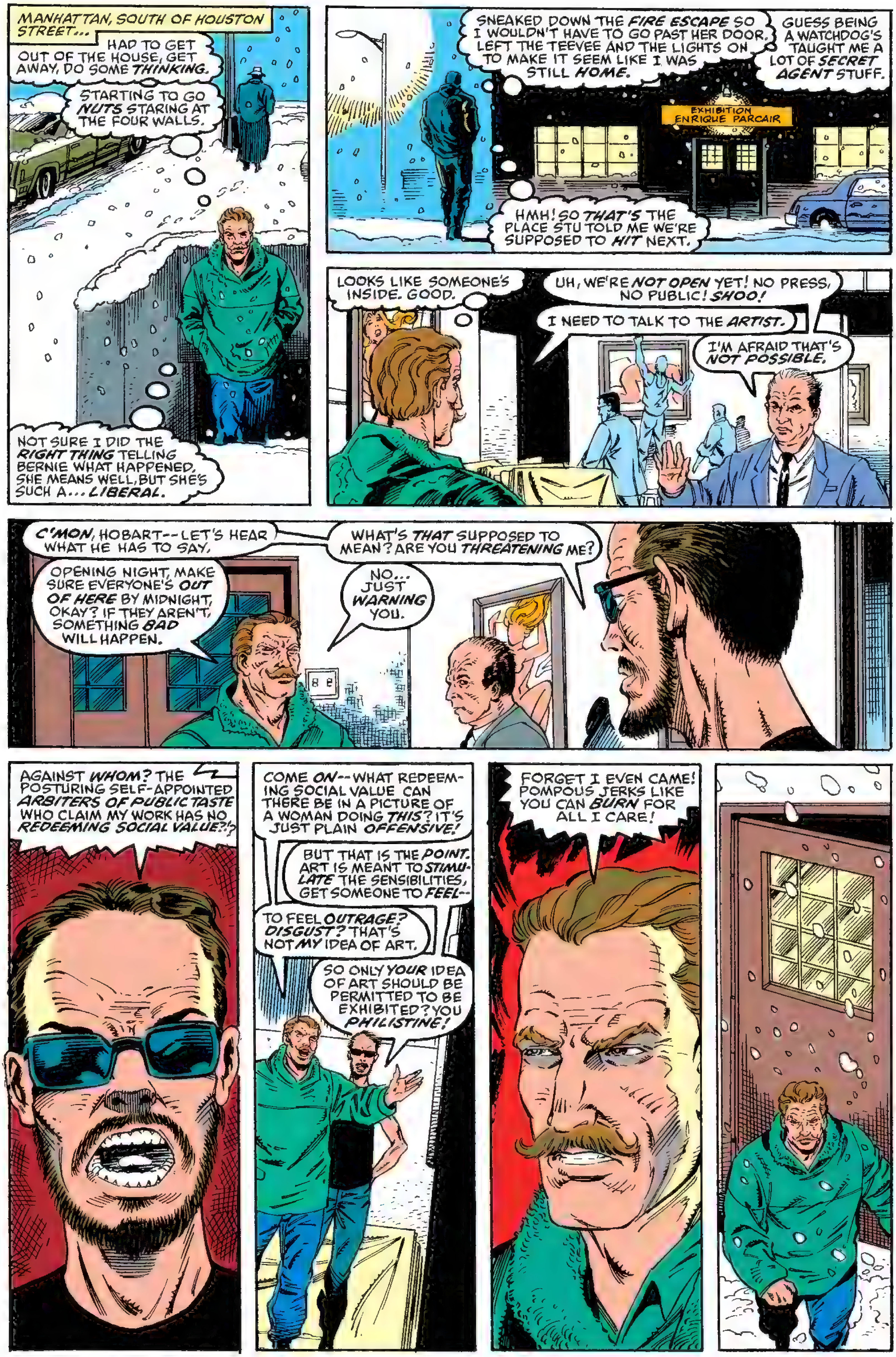

STEVE? *PEGGY* HERE. I'VE GOT *BERNIE ROSENTHAL* ON THE LINE, AND SHE CLAIMS IT'S A MATTER OF *LIFE AND DEATH*.
SEND THE CALL TO EXTENSION 2-2-6.
AVENGERS
PRIORITY IDENTICARD
Captain America
AUTHORIZED CARDHOLDER
Raymond Sikorski
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL DIRECT
George Winton
UNITED STATES PRESIDENT
FULL SECURITY CLEARANCE

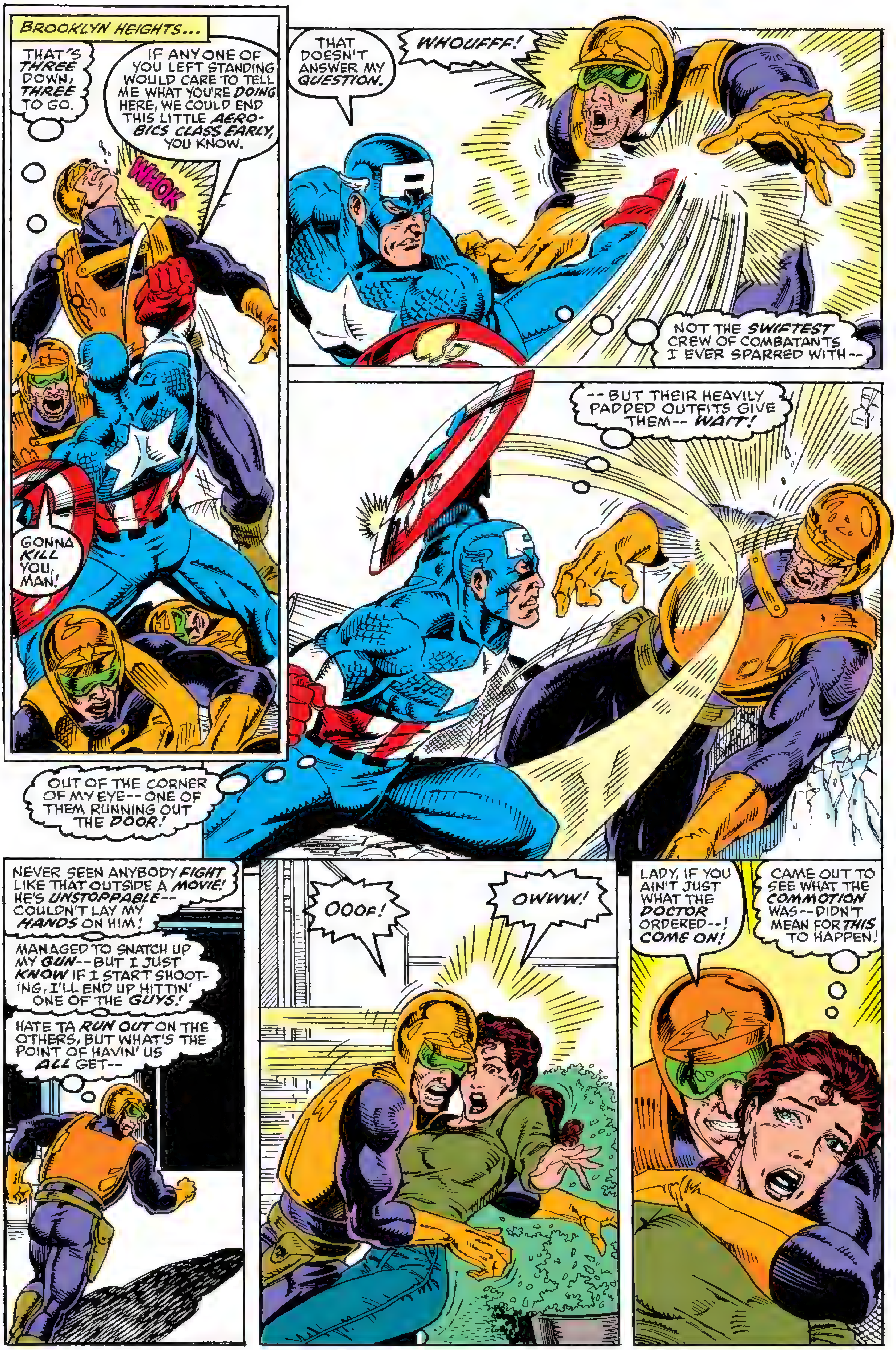

TAKE FIVE, GENTLEMEN. I'VE GOT TO TAKE A *CALL*.
WHEW!

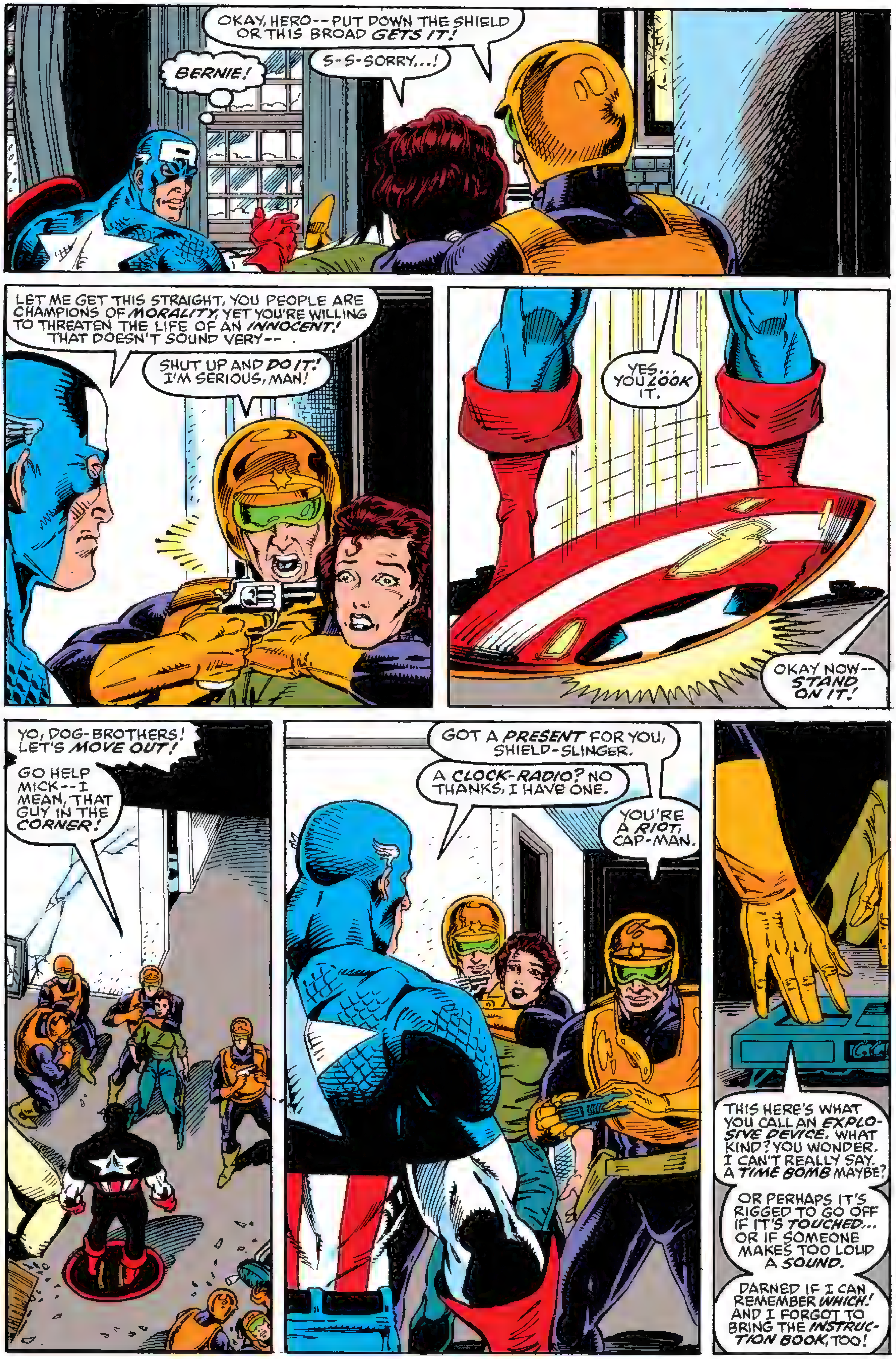

FIVE MINUTES LATER...
BERNIE CLAIMS MIKE FARREL IS IN A GREAT DEAL OF TROUBLE BUT SHE WOULDN'T SAY FROM WHAT.
I SWEAR IF THIS IS JUST AN EXCUSE TO SEE ME, I'M GOING TO BE VERY UPSET.
BROOKLYN HEIGHTS...
HEY--SHOULDN'T THE HOUNDS BE HERE BY NOW? I'M FREEZIN' MY PANTS OFF SITTIN' HERE WITHOUT THE HEAT ON.
THEY'RE ON THEIR WAY. IT'S JUST TAKING A WHILE WITH THIS SNOW SNARLING UP TRAFFIC.
SO WHAT'S FARREL UP TO NOW?
WATCHING TV, SOUNDS LIKE.
MAYBE WE OUGHTTA DIAL HIS NUMBER, MAKE SURE HE'S HOME.
GO AHEAD. I'M NOT GOING OUTSIDE. TOO COLD.
HEY!
SKREEE
OKAY, BARTLETT--WE'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE.
WHAT DO YOU WANT US TO DO?
LET US HAVE YOUR PARKING SPACE.
MITCHELL, KEARNY, GOETZKE--THE FIRE ESCAPE.
BUKOWSKI, MAY--WITH ME.

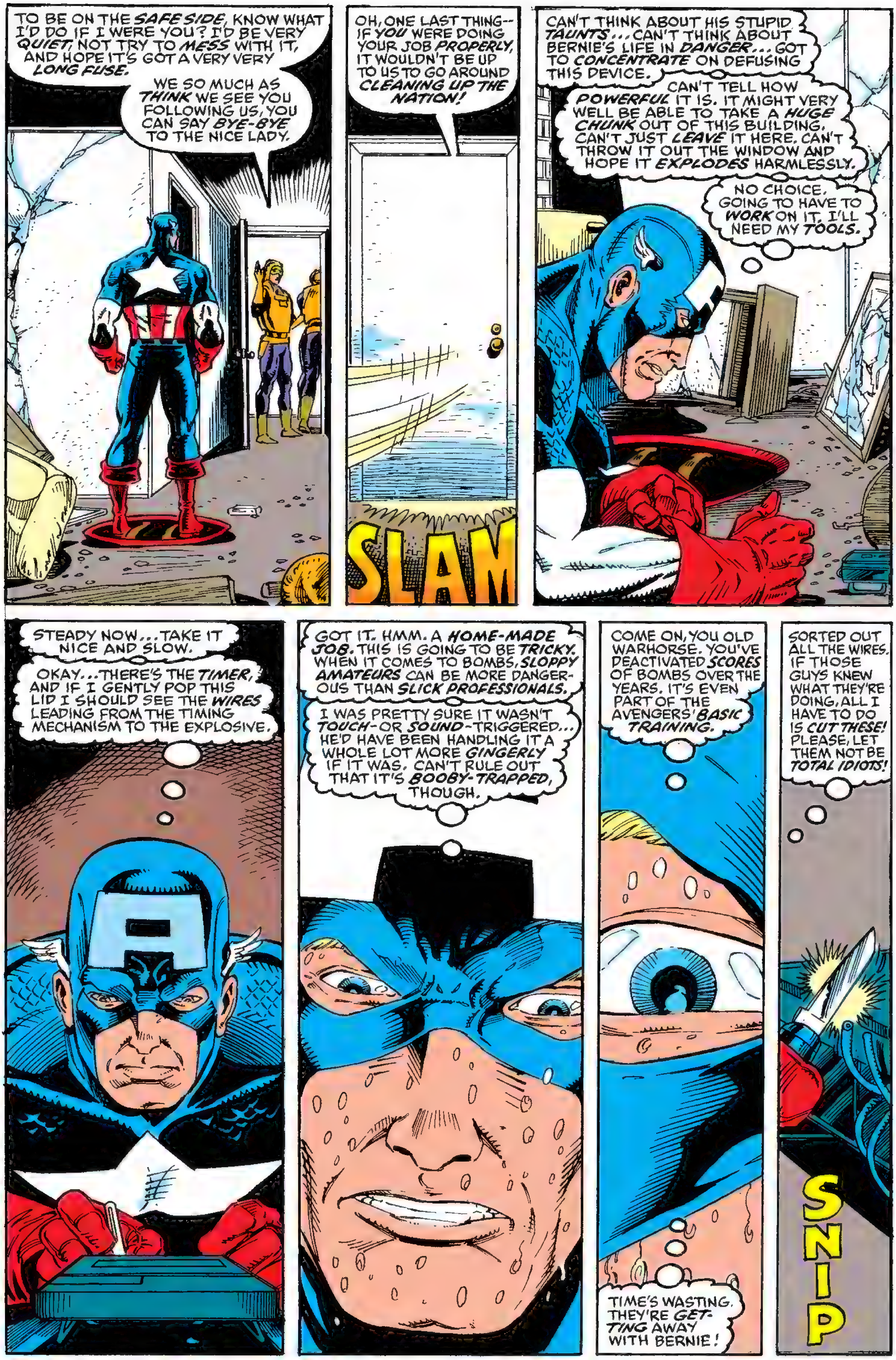

I DON'T THINK SO... HOMEY DON'T PLAY THAT!
HE'S GOT THE *TEEVEE* ON PLENTY *LOUD* --NO WAY WILL HE *HEAR* ANYONE PICKING THE LOCK!
CLIC
AND WHAT, IF NOTHING ELSE, HAVE WE LEARNED, CHILLIN?
MUST BE IN THE *BEDROOM*.
HE'S NOT *IN THERE*, BOSS.
YOU CHECK THE *CLOSETS* AND *BATHROOM*?
OF COURSE!
THOSE MORONS IN THE VAN SAID THEY DIDN'T *SEE* OR *HEAR* HIM LEAVE!
WHMMP
LEAVE? BUT I JUST GOT HERE!
WHAAAAT--?

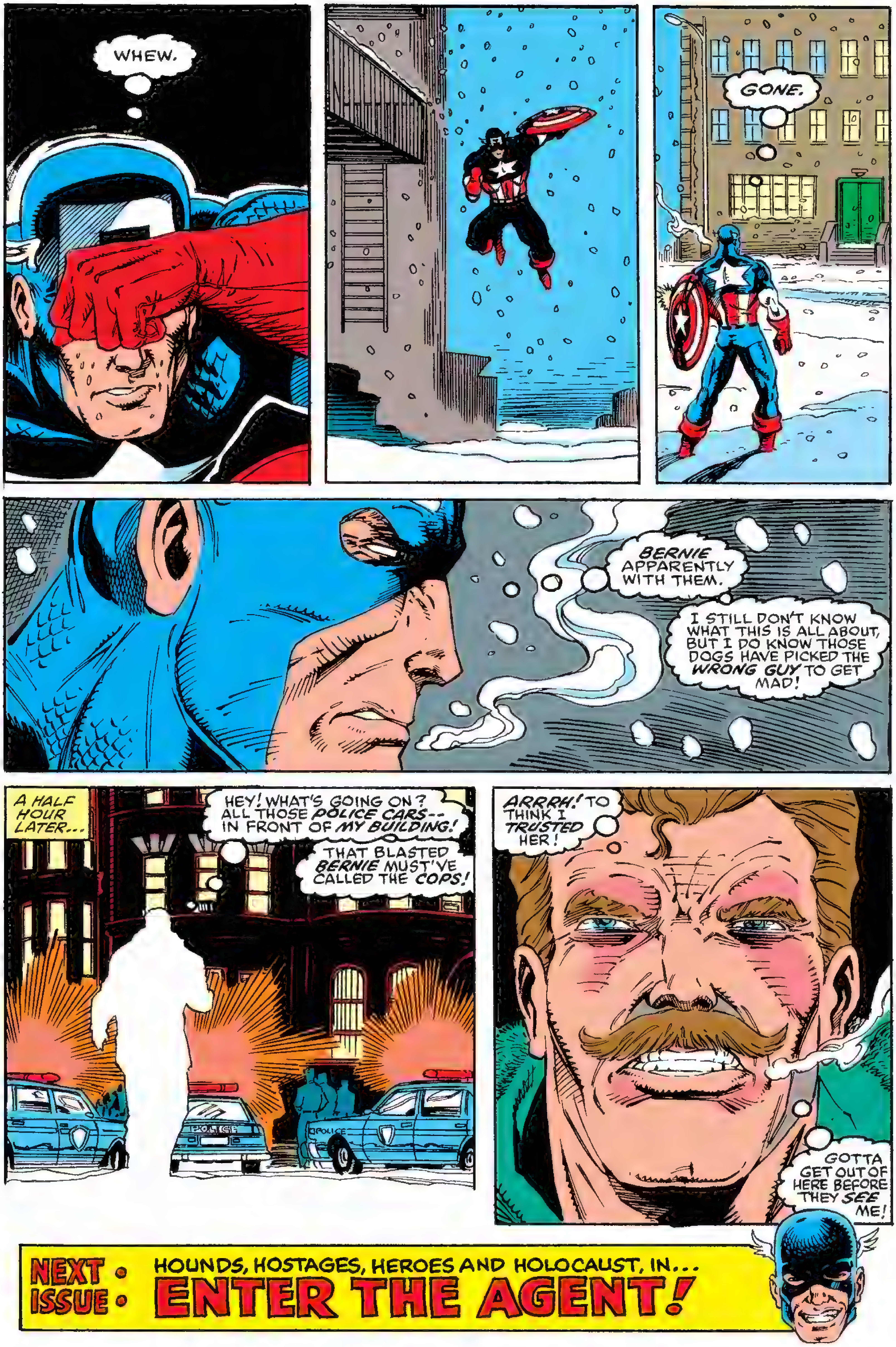

IF THESE GUYS TURN OUT TO BE *FRIENDS* OF MIKE'S DRESSED UP FOR A *COSTUME PARTY*--BOY, WILL I BE EMBARRASSED!
BUT THE *HARDWARE* THEY'RE PACKING LOOKS A LITTLE TOO *REAL* TO BE PROPS!
GNNG
BWUUH
I'VE FOUGHT A LOT OF *PARAMILITARY OUTFITS* BUT NONE CLAD LIKE THESE. UNLESS I'M MISTAKEN, THIS IS THE UNIFORM OF THAT *CENSORSHIP GROUP* THAT STARTED UP DOWN SOUTH-- THE *WATCHDOGS!*
I TRUST YOU SIX GENTLEMEN HAVE *GUN PERMITS* FOR THOSE .45s YOU'RE CARRYING. HOW ABOUT I *DISARM* YOU, JUST TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE?
GET HIM!
DON'T SEE *MIKE* ANYWHERE. WHAT DO THESE GOONS *WANT* WITH HIM?
WHOUFF!
THOOM


MANHATTAN, SOUTH OF HOUSTON STREET...
HAD TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE, GET AWAY, DO SOME *THINKING.*
STARTING TO GO *NUTS* STARING AT THE FOUR WALLS.
NOT SURE I DID THE *RIGHT THING* TELLING BERNIE WHAT HAPPENED. SHE MEANS WELL, BUT SHE'S SUCH A... *LIBERAL.*
SNEAKED DOWN THE *FIRE ESCAPE* SO I WOULDN'T HAVE TO GO PAST HER DOOR. LEFT THE TEEVEE AND THE LIGHTS ON TO MAKE IT SEEM LIKE I WAS STILL *HOME.*
GUESS BEING A WATCHDOG'S TAUGHT ME A LOT OF *SECRET AGENT* STUFF.
EXHIBITION ENRIQUE PARCAIR
HMH! SO *THAT'S* THE PLACE STU TOLD ME WE'RE SUPPOSED TO *HIT* NEXT.
LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE'S INSIDE. GOOD.
UH, WE'RE *NOT OPEN* YET! NO PRESS, NO PUBLIC! *SHOO!*
I NEED TO TALK TO THE *ARTIST.*
I'M AFRAID THAT'S *NOT POSSIBLE.*
C'MON, HOBART--LET'S HEAR WHAT HE HAS TO SAY.
OPENING NIGHT, MAKE SURE EVERYONE'S *OUT OF HERE* BY MIDNIGHT, OKAY? IF THEY AREN'T, SOMETHING *BAD* WILL HAPPEN.
WHAT'S *THAT* SUPPOSED TO MEAN? ARE YOU *THREATENING* ME?
NO... JUST *WARNING* YOU.
AGAINST *WHOM?* THE POSTURING SELF-APPOINTED *ARBITERS OF PUBLIC TASTE* WHO CLAIM MY WORK HAS NO *REDEEMING SOCIAL VALUE?!?*
COME *ON*--WHAT REDEEMING SOCIAL VALUE CAN THERE BE IN A PICTURE OF A WOMAN DOING *THIS?* IT'S JUST PLAIN *OFFENSIVE!*
BUT THAT IS THE *POINT.* ART IS MEANT TO *STIMULATE* THE SENSIBILITIES, GET SOMEONE TO *FEEL*--
TO FEEL *OUTRAGE? DISGUST?* THAT'S NOT *MY* IDEA OF ART.
SO ONLY *YOUR* IDEA OF ART SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO BE EXHIBITED? YOU *PHILISTINE!*
FORGET I EVEN CAME! POMPOUS JERKS LIKE YOU CAN *BURN* FOR ALL I CARE!


BROOKLYN HEIGHTS...
THAT'S *THREE* DOWN, *THREE* TO GO.
IF ANYONE OF YOU LEFT STANDING WOULD CARE TO TELL ME WHAT YOU'RE *DOING* HERE, WE COULD END THIS LITTLE *AEROBICS CLASS EARLY*, YOU KNOW.
WHOK
GONNA *KILL* YOU, MAN!
THAT DOESN'T ANSWER MY *QUESTION*.
WHOUFFF!
NOT THE *SWIFTEST* CREW OF COMBATANTS I EVER SPARRED WITH--
--BUT THEIR HEAVILY PADDED OUTFITS GIVE THEM-- *WAIT!*
OUT OF THE CORNER OF MY EYE--ONE OF THEM RUNNING OUT THE *DOOR!*
NEVER SEEN ANYBODY *FIGHT* LIKE THAT OUTSIDE A *MOVIE!* HE'S *UNSTOPPABLE*-- COULDN'T LAY MY *HANDS* ON HIM!
MANAGED TO SNATCH UP MY *GUN*--BUT I JUST *KNOW* IF I START SHOOTING, I'LL END UP HITTIN' ONE OF THE *GUYS!*
HATE TA *RUN OUT* ON THE OTHERS, BUT WHAT'S THE POINT OF HAVIN' US *ALL* GET--
OOOF!
OWWW!
LADY, IF YOU AIN'T JUST WHAT THE *DOCTOR* ORDERED--! *COME ON!*
CAME OUT TO SEE WHAT THE *COMMOTION* WAS--DIDN'T MEAN FOR *THIS* TO HAPPEN!

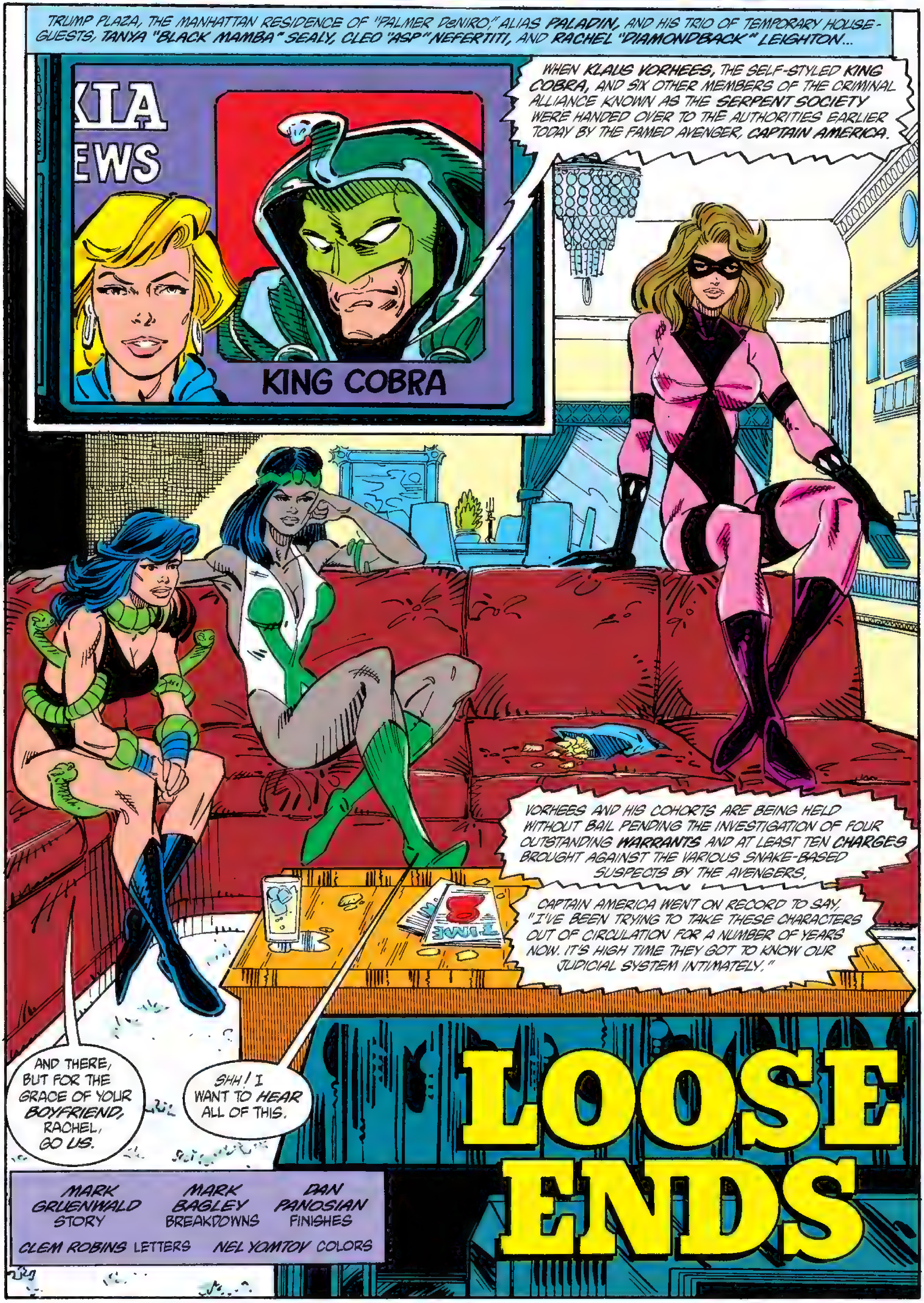

OKAY, HERO--PUT DOWN THE SHIELD OR THIS BROAD GETS IT!
BERNIE!
S-S-SORRY...!
LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT. YOU PEOPLE ARE CHAMPIONS OF MORALITY, YET YOU'RE WILLING TO THREATEN THE LIFE OF AN INNOCENT! THAT DOESN'T SOUND VERY-- .
SHUT UP AND DO IT! I'M SERIOUS, MAN!
YES... YOU LOOK IT.
OKAY NOW-- STAND ON IT!
YO, DOG-BROTHERS! LET'S MOVE OUT!
GO HELP MICK--I MEAN, THAT GUY IN THE CORNER!
GOT A PRESENT FOR YOU, SHIELD-SLINGER.
A CLOCK-RADIO? NO THANKS, I HAVE ONE.
YOU'RE A RIOT, CAP-MAN.
THIS HERE'S WHAT YOU CALL AN EXPLOSIVE DEVICE. WHAT KIND? YOU WONDER. I CAN'T REALLY SAY. A TIME BOMB MAYBE?
OR PERHAPS IT'S RIGGED TO GO OFF IF IT'S TOUCHED... OR IF SOMEONE MAKES TOO LOUD A SOUND.
DARNED IF I CAN REMEMBER WHICH! AND I FORGOT TO BRING THE INSTRUCTION BOOK, TOO!

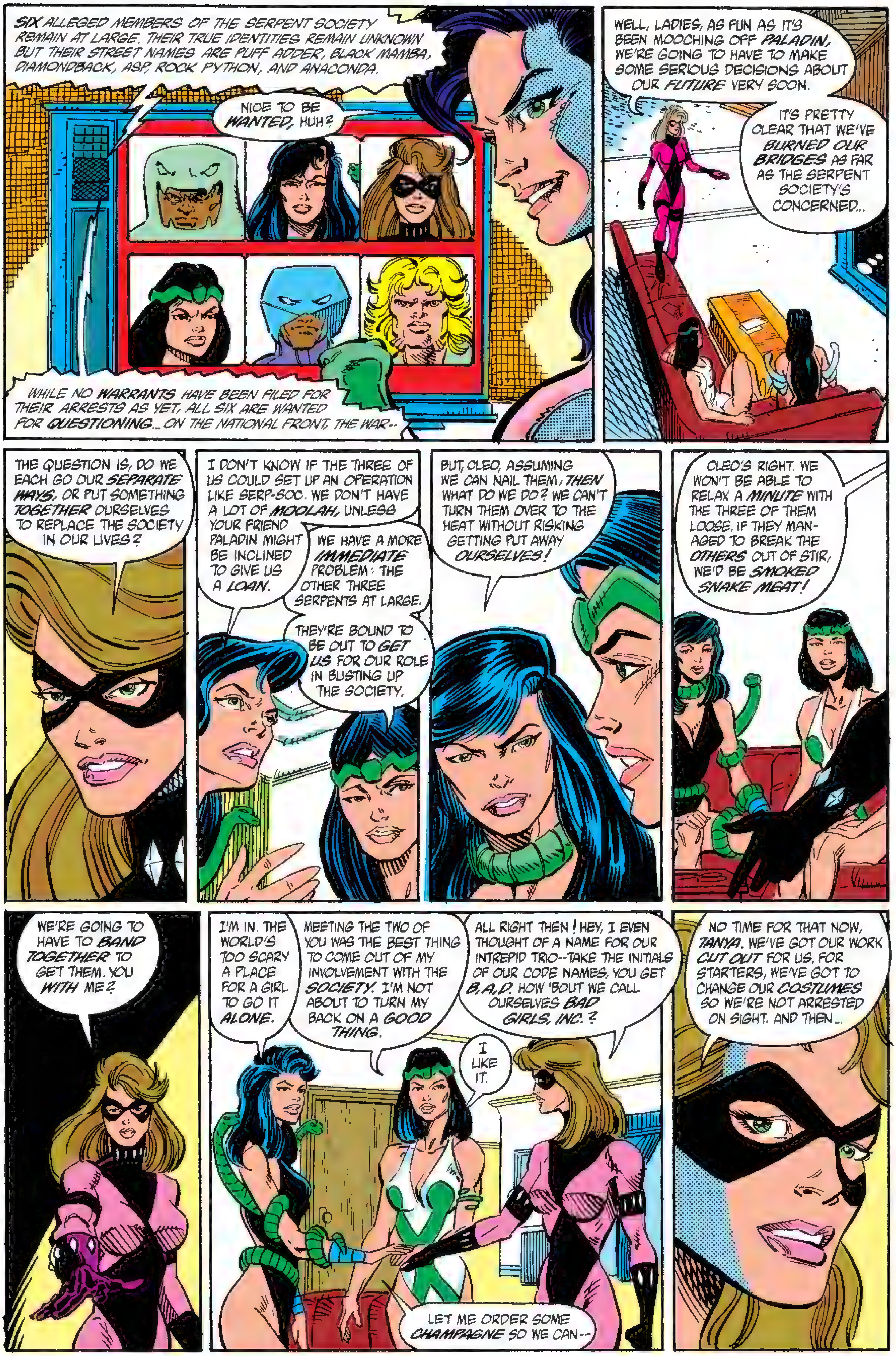

TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE, KNOW WHAT I'D DO IF I WERE YOU? I'D BE VERY QUIET, NOT TRY TO MESS WITH IT, AND HOPE IT'S GOT A VERY VERY LONG FUSE.
WE SO MUCH AS THINK WE SEE YOU FOLLOWING US, YOU CAN SAY BYE-BYE TO THE NICE LADY.
OH, ONE LAST THING-- IF YOU WERE DOING YOUR JOB PROPERLY, IT WOULDN'T BE UP TO US TO GO AROUND CLEANING UP THE NATION!
SLAM
CAN'T THINK ABOUT HIS STUPID TAUNTS... CAN'T THINK ABOUT BERNIE'S LIFE IN DANGER... GOT TO CONCENTRATE ON DEFUSING THIS DEVICE.
CAN'T TELL HOW POWERFUL IT IS. IT MIGHT VERY WELL BE ABLE TO TAKE A HUGE CHUNK OUT OF THIS BUILDING. CAN'T JUST LEAVE IT HERE. CAN'T THROW IT OUT THE WINDOW AND HOPE IT EXPLODES HARMLESSLY.
NO CHOICE. GOING TO HAVE TO WORK ON IT. I'LL NEED MY TOOLS.
STEADY NOW... TAKE IT NICE AND SLOW.
OKAY... THERE'S THE TIMER, AND IF I GENTLY POP THIS LID I SHOULD SEE THE WIRES LEADING FROM THE TIMING MECHANISM TO THE EXPLOSIVE.
GOT IT. HMM. A HOME-MADE JOB. THIS IS GOING TO BE TRICKY. WHEN IT COMES TO BOMBS, SLOPPY AMATEURS CAN BE MORE DANGEROUS THAN SLICK PROFESSIONALS.
I WAS PRETTY SURE IT WASN'T TOUCH- OR SOUND-TRIGGERED... HE'D HAVE BEEN HANDLING IT A WHOLE LOT MORE GINGERLY IF IT WAS. CAN'T RULE OUT THAT IT'S BOOBY-TRAPPED, THOUGH.
COME ON, YOU OLD WARHORSE. YOU'VE DEACTIVATED SCORES OF BOMBS OVER THE YEARS. IT'S EVEN PART OF THE AVENGERS' BASIC TRAINING.
TIME'S WASTING. THEY'RE GETTING AWAY WITH BERNIE!
SORTED OUT ALL THE WIRES. IF THOSE GUYS KNEW WHAT THEY'RE DOING, ALL I HAVE TO DO IS CUT THESE! PLEASE, LET THEM NOT BE TOTAL IDIOTS!
SNIP

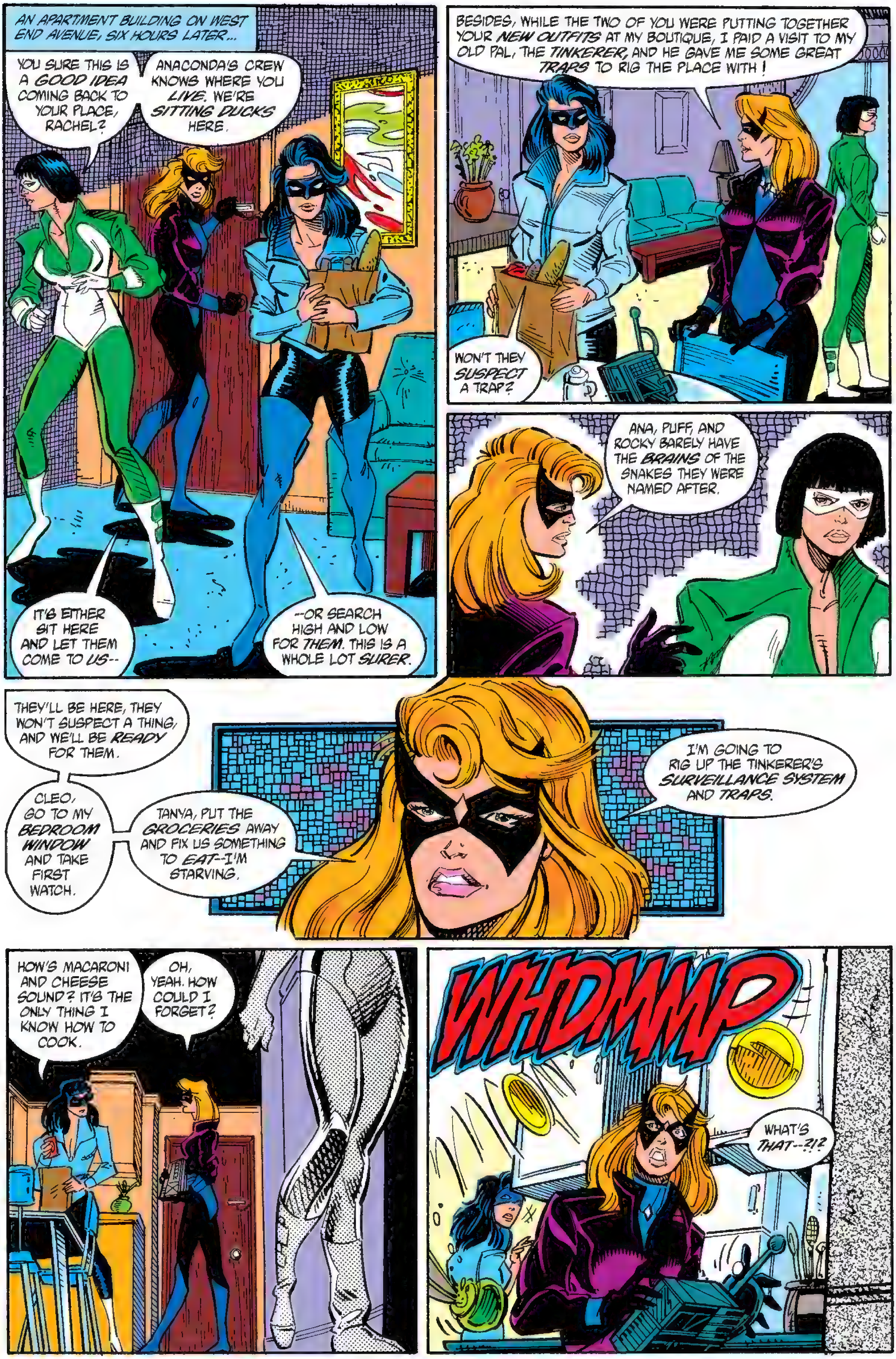

WHEW.
GONE.
BERNIE APPARENTLY WITH THEM.
I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT, BUT I DO KNOW THOSE DOGS HAVE PICKED THE WRONG GUY TO GET MAD!
A HALF HOUR LATER...
HEY! WHAT'S GOING ON? ALL THOSE POLICE CARS-- IN FRONT OF MY BUILDING!
THAT BLASTED BERNIE MUST'VE CALLED THE COPS!
POLICE
POLICE
ARRRH! TO THINK I TRUSTED HER!
GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE THEY SEE ME!
NEXT ISSUE: HOUNDS, HOSTAGES, HEROES AND HOLOCAUST, IN... ENTER THE AGENT!

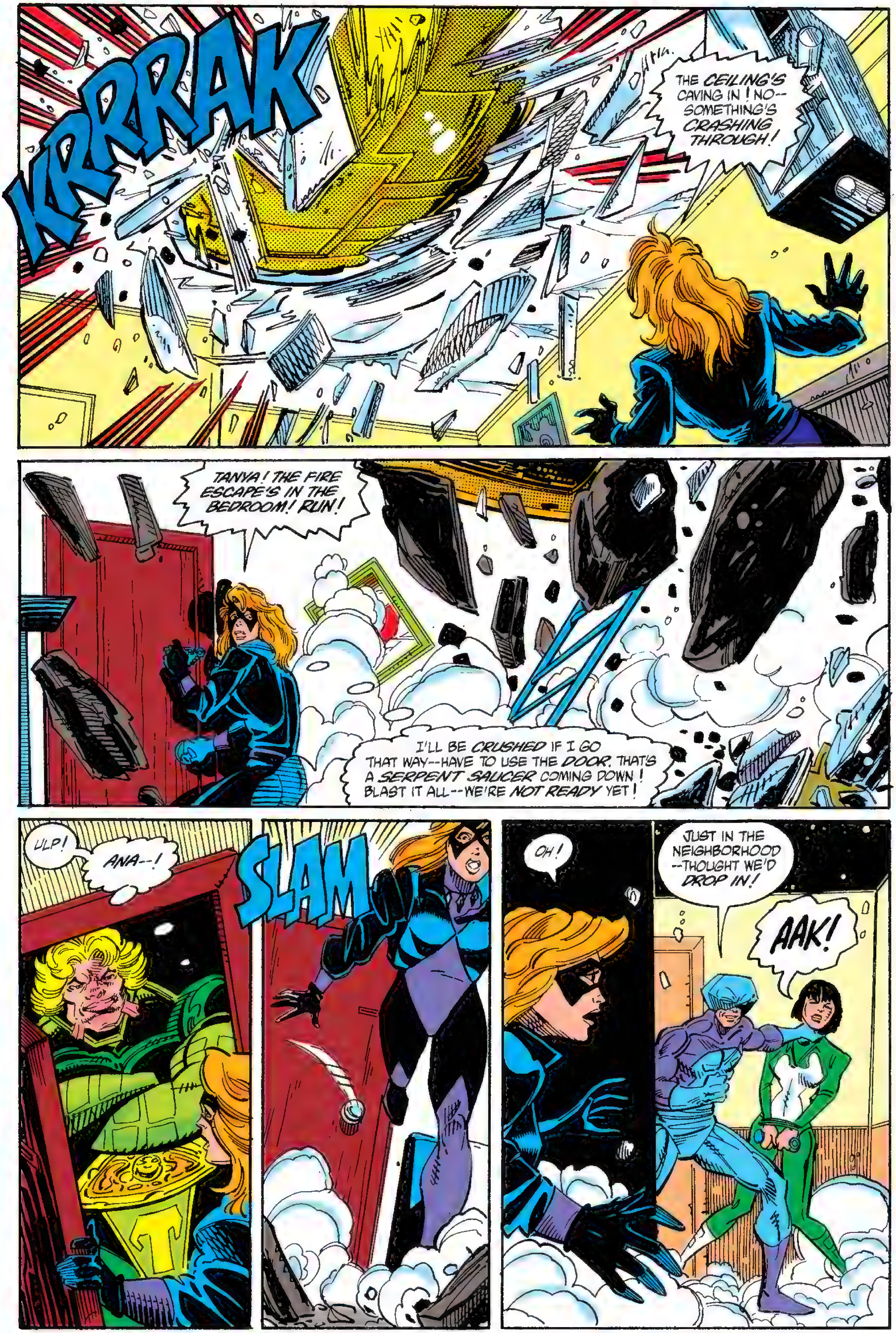
Stan Lee Presents:

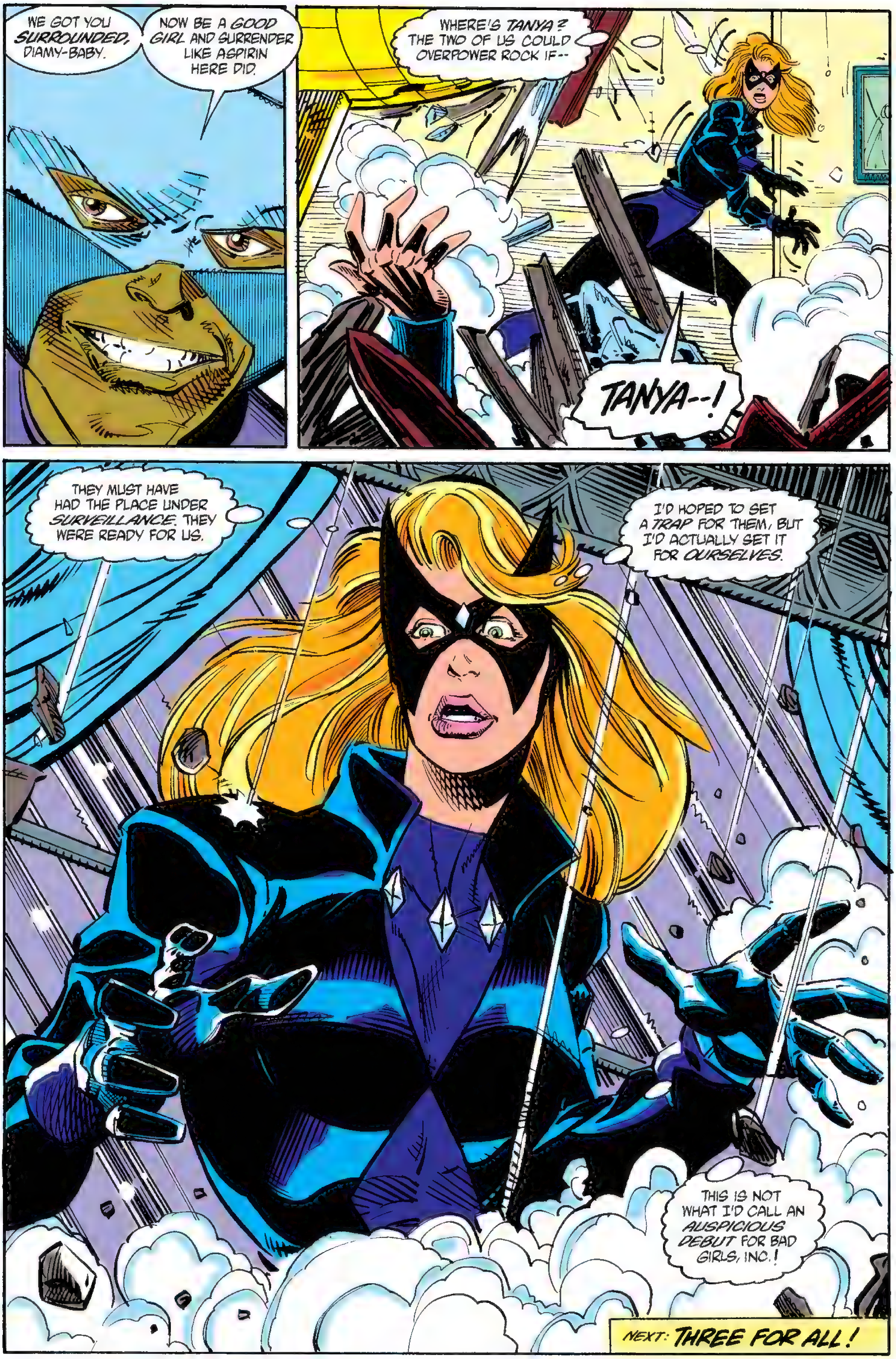
DIAMONDBACK!


TRUMP PLAZA, THE MANHATTAN RESIDENCE OF "PALMER DeNIRO," ALIAS **PALADIN,** AND HIS TRIO OF TEMPORARY HOUSE-GUESTS, **TANYA "BLACK MAMBA" SEALY, CLEO "ASP" NEFERTITI,** AND **RACHEL "DIAMONDBACK" LEIGHTON...**
KIA
EWS
KING COBRA
WHEN **KLAUS VORHEES,** THE SELF-STYLED **KING COBRA,** AND SIX OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CRIMINAL ALLIANCE KNOWN AS THE **SERPENT SOCIETY** WERE HANDED OVER TO THE AUTHORITIES EARLIER TODAY BY THE FAMED AVENGER, **CAPTAIN AMERICA.**
VORHEES AND HIS COHORTS ARE BEING HELD WITHOUT BAIL PENDING THE INVESTIGATION OF FOUR OUTSTANDING **WARRANTS** AND AT LEAST TEN **CHARGES** BROUGHT AGAINST THE VARIOUS SNAKE-BASED SUSPECTS BY THE AVENGERS.
CAPTAIN AMERICA WENT ON RECORD TO SAY, "I'VE BEEN TRYING TO TAKE THESE CHARACTERS OUT OF CIRCULATION FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS NOW. IT'S HIGH TIME THEY GOT TO KNOW OUR JUDICIAL SYSTEM INTIMATELY."
TIME
AND THERE, BUT FOR THE GRACE OF YOUR *BOYFRIEND,* RACHEL, GO *US.*
SHH! I WANT TO *HEAR* ALL OF THIS.
LOOSE ENDS
MARK GRUENWALD STORY
MARK BAGLEY BREAKDOWNS
DAN PANOSIAN FINISHES
CLEM ROBINS LETTERS
NEL YOMTOV COLORS


SIX ALLEGED MEMBERS OF THE SERPENT SOCIETY REMAIN AT LARGE. THEIR TRUE IDENTITIES REMAIN UNKNOWN BUT THEIR STREET NAMES ARE PUFF ADDER, BLACK MAMBA, DIAMONDBACK, ASP, ROCK PYTHON, AND ANACONDA.
NICE TO BE WANTED, HUH?
WHILE NO WARRANTS HAVE BEEN FILED FOR THEIR ARRESTS AS YET, ALL SIX ARE WANTED FOR QUESTIONING... ON THE NATIONAL FRONT, THE WAR--
WELL, LADIES, AS FUN AS IT'S BEEN MOOCHING OFF PALADIN, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO MAKE SOME SERIOUS DECISIONS ABOUT OUR FUTURE VERY SOON.
IT'S PRETTY CLEAR THAT WE'VE BURNED OUR BRIDGES AS FAR AS THE SERPENT SOCIETY'S CONCERNED...
THE QUESTION IS, DO WE EACH GO OUR SEPARATE WAYS, OR PUT SOMETHING TOGETHER OURSELVES TO REPLACE THE SOCIETY IN OUR LIVES?
I DON'T KNOW IF THE THREE OF US COULD SET UP AN OPERATION LIKE SERP-SOC. WE DON'T HAVE A LOT OF MOOLAH, UNLESS YOUR FRIEND PALADIN MIGHT BE INCLINED TO GIVE US A LOAN.
WE HAVE A MORE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM: THE OTHER THREE SERPENTS AT LARGE.
THEY'RE BOUND TO BE OUT TO GET US FOR OUR ROLE IN BUSTING UP THE SOCIETY.
BUT, CLEO, ASSUMING WE CAN NAIL THEM, THEN WHAT DO WE DO? WE CAN'T TURN THEM OVER TO THE HEAT WITHOUT RISKING GETTING PUT AWAY OURSELVES!
CLEO'S RIGHT. WE WON'T BE ABLE TO RELAX A MINUTE WITH THE THREE OF THEM LOOSE. IF THEY MANAGED TO BREAK THE OTHERS OUT OF STIR, WE'D BE SMOKED SNAKE MEAT!
WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO BAND TOGETHER TO GET THEM. YOU WITH ME?
I'M IN. THE WORLD'S TOO SCARY A PLACE FOR A GIRL TO GO IT ALONE.
MEETING THE TWO OF YOU WAS THE BEST THING TO COME OUT OF MY INVOLVEMENT WITH THE SOCIETY. I'M NOT ABOUT TO TURN MY BACK ON A GOOD THING.
ALL RIGHT THEN! HEY, I EVEN THOUGHT OF A NAME FOR OUR INTREPID TRIO--TAKE THE INITIALS OF OUR CODE NAMES, YOU GET B.A.D. HOW 'BOUT WE CALL OURSELVES BAD GIRLS, INC.?
I LIKE IT.
LET ME ORDER SOME CHAMPAGNE SO WE CAN--
NO TIME FOR THAT NOW, TANYA. WE'VE GOT OUR WORK CUT OUT FOR US. FOR STARTERS, WE'VE GOT TO CHANGE OUR COSTUMES SO WE'RE NOT ARRESTED ON SIGHT. AND THEN...


AN APARTMENT BUILDING ON WEST END AVENUE, SIX HOURS LATER...
YOU SURE THIS IS A *GOOD IDEA* COMING BACK TO YOUR PLACE, RACHEL?
ANACONDA'S CREW KNOWS WHERE YOU *LIVE*. WE'RE *SITTING DUCKS* HERE.
IT'S EITHER SIT HERE AND LET THEM COME TO *US*--
--OR SEARCH HIGH AND LOW FOR *THEM*. THIS IS A WHOLE LOT *SURER*.
BESIDES, WHILE THE TWO OF YOU WERE PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR *NEW OUTFITS* AT MY BOUTIQUE, I PAID A VISIT TO MY OLD PAL, THE *TINKERER*, AND HE GAVE ME SOME GREAT *TRAPS* TO RIG THE PLACE WITH!
WON'T THEY *SUSPECT* A TRAP?
ANA, PUFF, AND ROCKY BARELY HAVE THE *BRAINS* OF THE SNAKES THEY WERE NAMED AFTER.
THEY'LL BE HERE, THEY WON'T SUSPECT A THING, AND WE'LL BE *READY* FOR THEM.
CLEO, GO TO MY *BEDROOM WINDOW* AND TAKE FIRST WATCH.
TANYA, PUT THE *GROCERIES* AWAY AND FIX US SOMETHING TO *EAT*--I'M STARVING.
I'M GOING TO RIG UP THE TINKERER'S *SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM* AND *TRAPS*.
HOW'S MACARONI AND CHEESE SOUND? IT'S THE ONLY THING I KNOW HOW TO COOK.
OH, YEAH. HOW COULD I FORGET?
WHOMMP
WHAT'S *THAT*--?!?


KRRRAK
THE CEILING'S CAVING IN! NO-- SOMETHING'S CRASHING THROUGH!
TANYA! THE FIRE ESCAPE'S IN THE BEDROOM! RUN!
I'LL BE CRUSHED IF I GO THAT WAY--HAVE TO USE THE DOOR. THAT'S A SERPENT SAUCER COMING DOWN! BLAST IT ALL--WE'RE NOT READY YET!
ULP!
ANA--!
SLAM
OH!
JUST IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD --THOUGHT WE'D DROP IN!
AAK!


WE GOT YOU *SURROUNDED,* DIAMY-BABY.
NOW BE A *GOOD GIRL* AND SURRENDER LIKE ASPIRIN HERE DID.
WHERE'S *TANYA?* THE TWO OF US COULD OVERPOWER ROCK IF--
TANYA--!
THEY MUST HAVE HAD THE PLACE UNDER *SURVEILLANCE.* THEY WERE READY FOR US.
I'D HOPED TO SET A *TRAP* FOR THEM, BUT I'D ACTUALLY SET IT FOR *OURSELVES.*
THIS IS NOT WHAT I'D CALL AN *AUSPICIOUS DEBUT* FOR BAD GIRLS, INC.!
NEXT: THREE FOR ALL!

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HERE COMES U.S. AGENT TO SAVE THE DAY-- --NOT!
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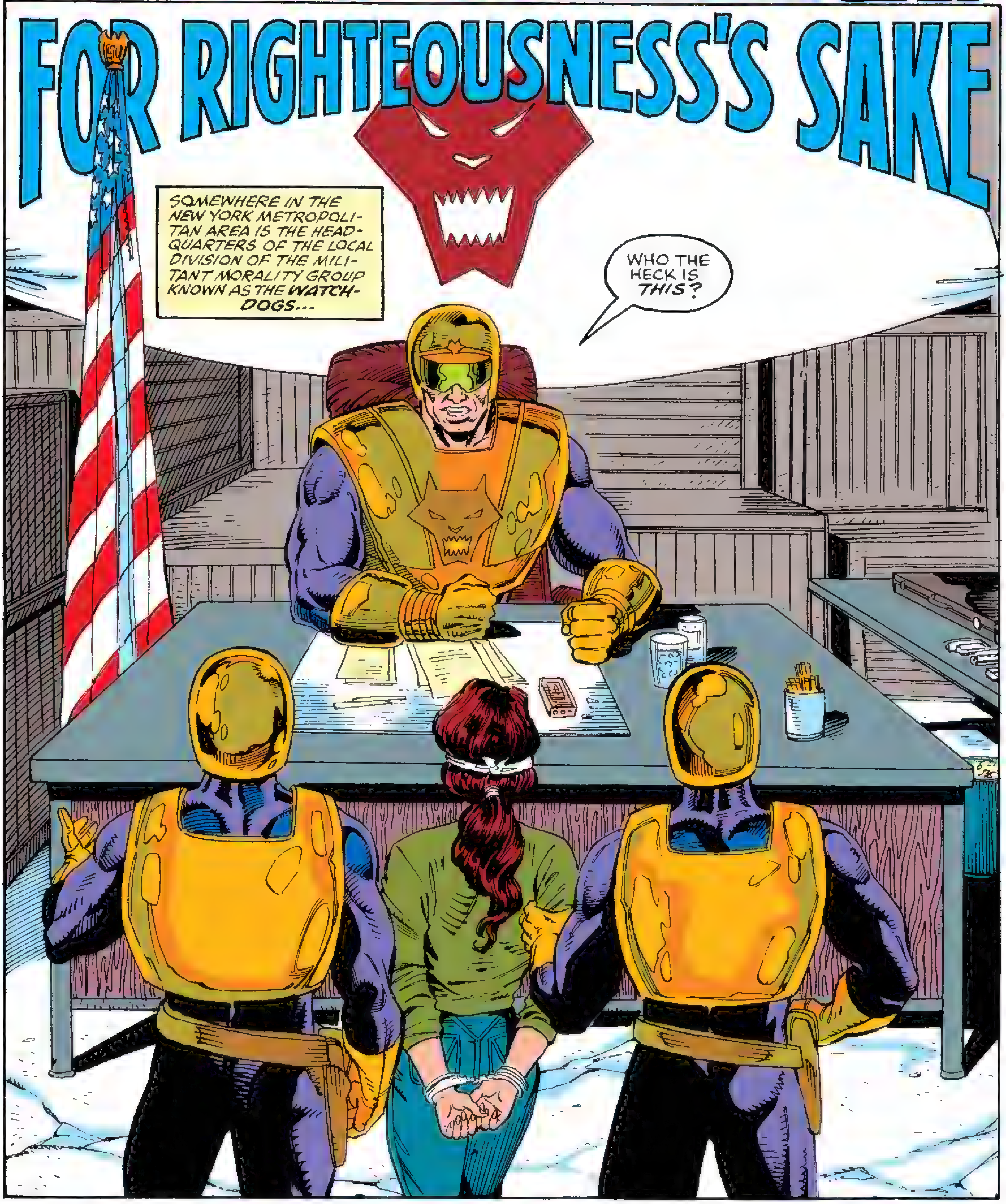
STEVE ROGERS . . . BORN IN THE U.S.A., RAISED TO CHERISH THE IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY, ENDOWED WITH A SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE, AND DRIVEN TO BE THE MOST CAPABLE COMBATANT IN THE WORLD. NOW AS BOTH LONE CRUSADER AND LEADER OF THE RENOWNED AVENGERS, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM!

Stan Lee PRESENTS:

CAPTAIN AMERICA!

FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS'S SAKE


SOMEWHERE IN THE NEW YORK METROPOLITAN AREA IS THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE LOCAL DIVISION OF THE MILITANT MORALITY GROUP KNOWN AS THE *WATCHDOGS*...
WHO THE HECK IS *THIS*?

MARK GRUENWALD WRITEDOG
RON LIM PENCILDOG
DANNY BULANADI INKDOG
JOE ROSEN LETTERDOG
CHRISTIE SCHEELE COLORDOG
RALPH MACCHIO EDITDOG
TOM DeFALCO HOTDOG

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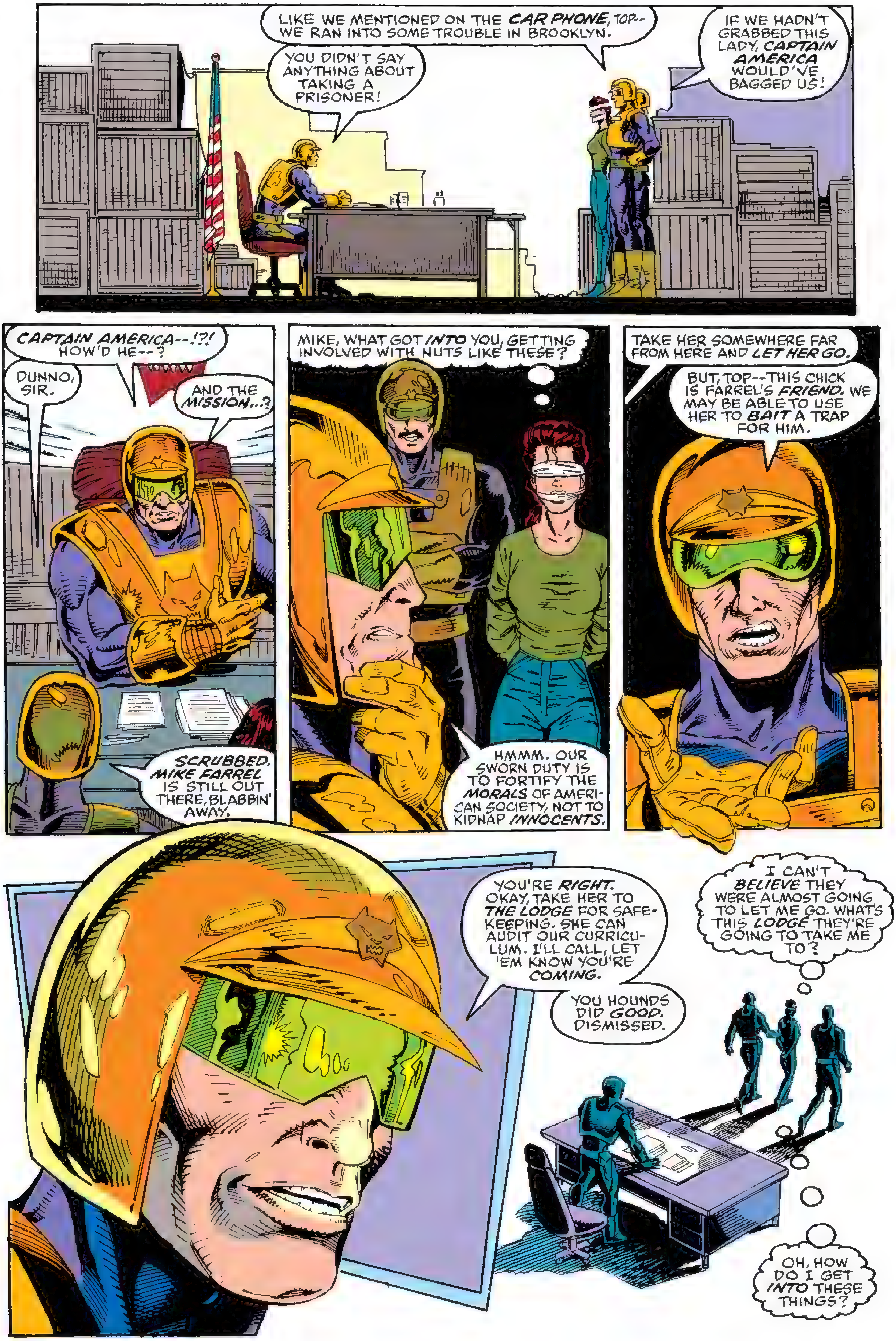
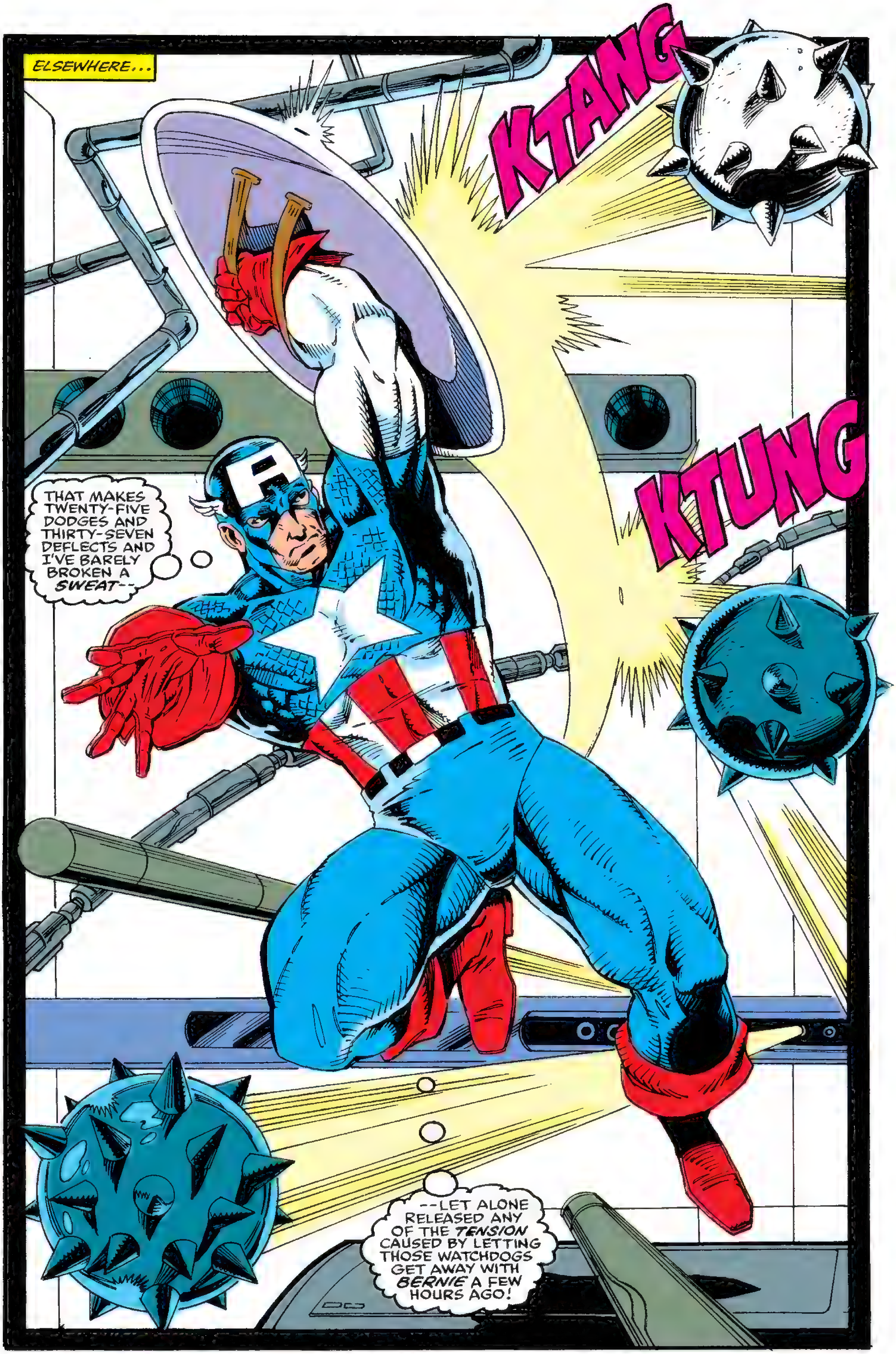
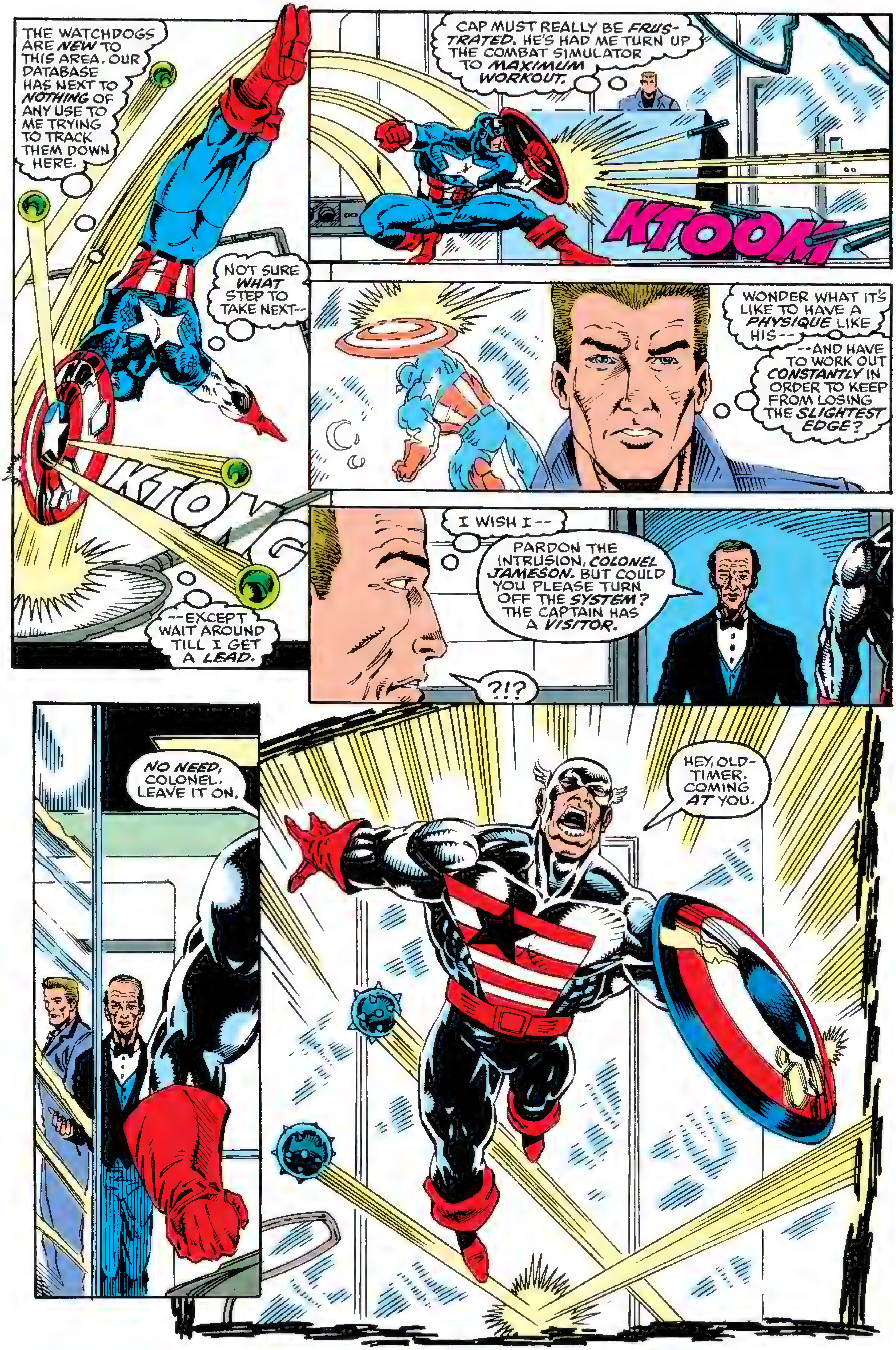
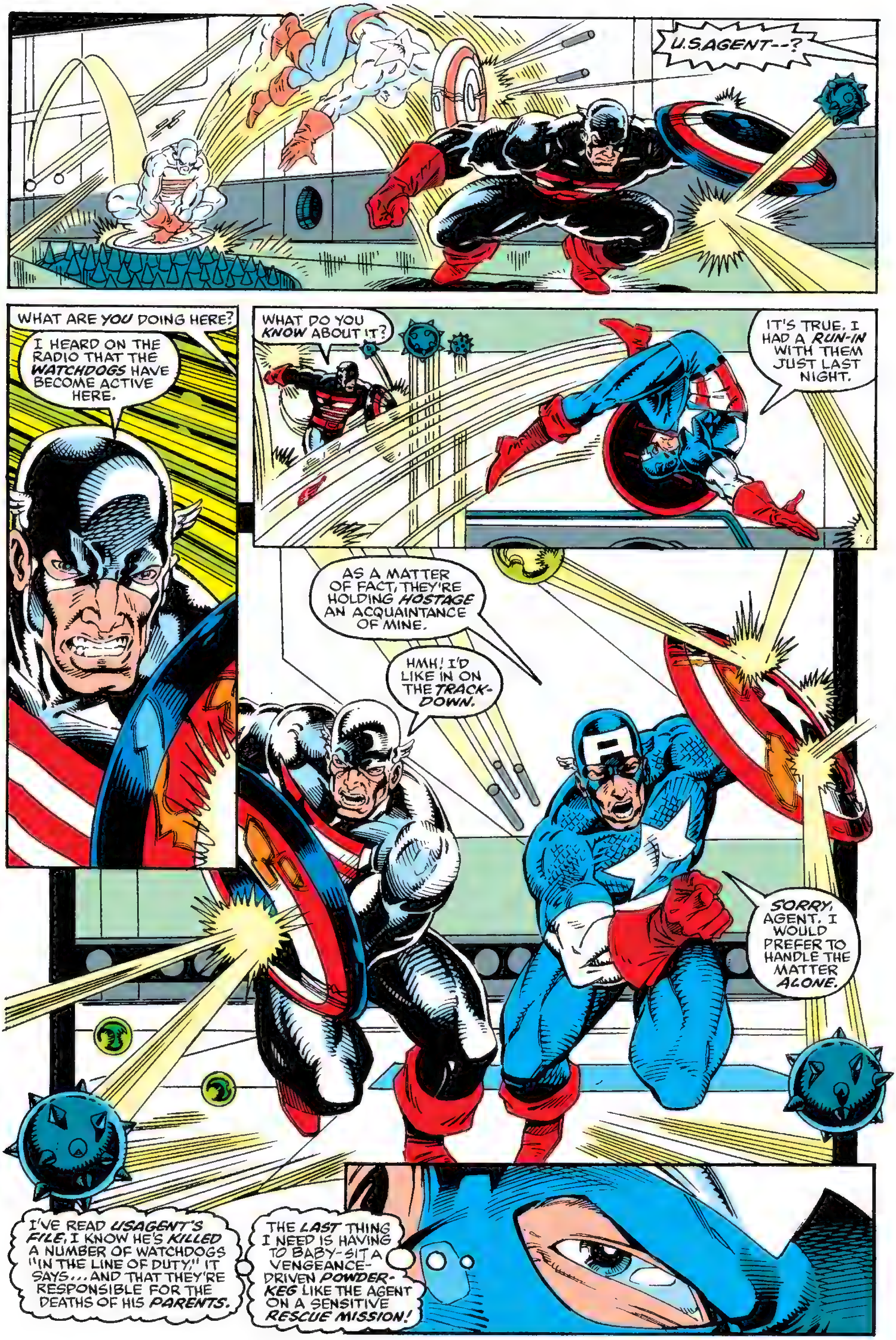
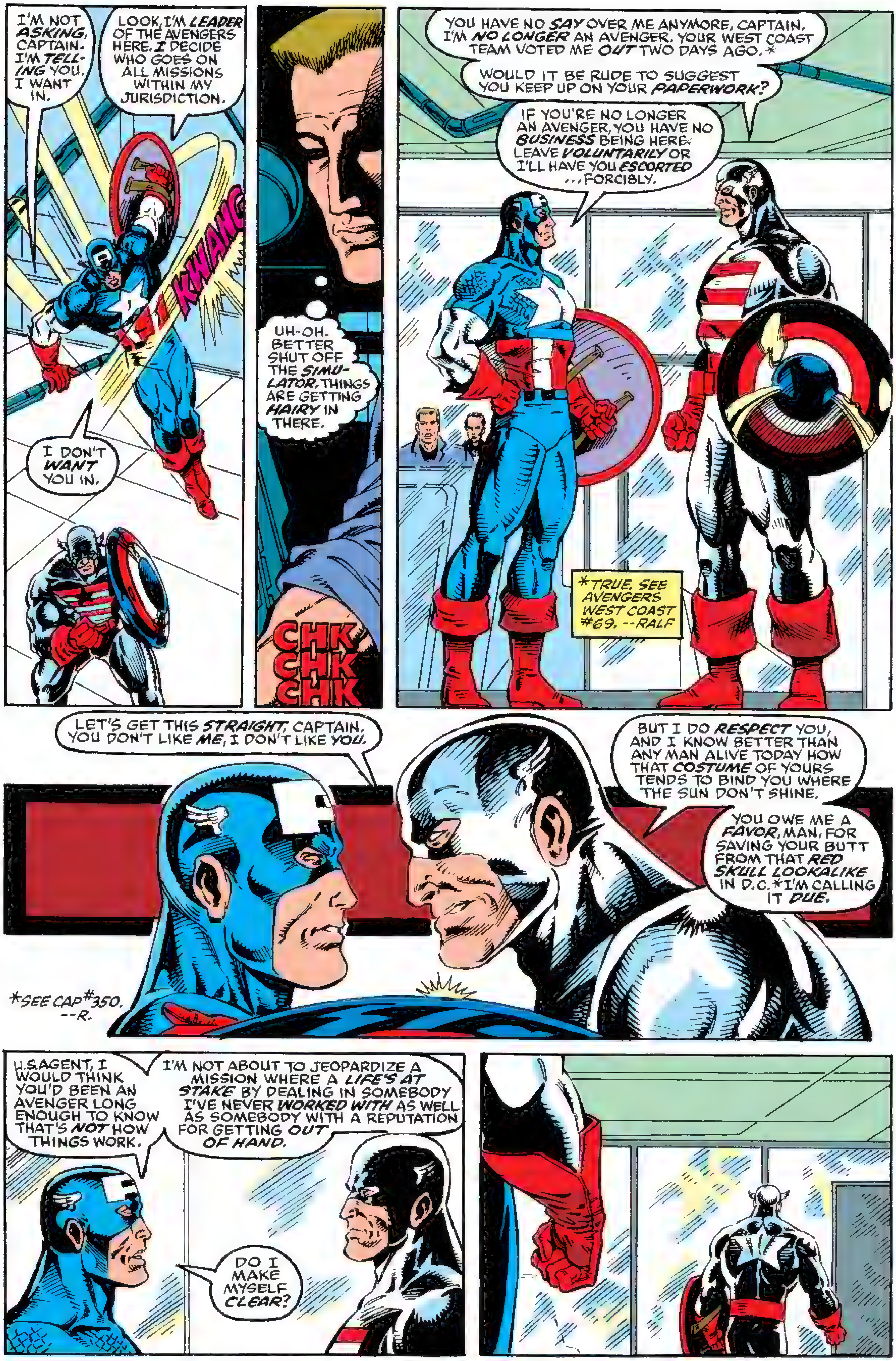
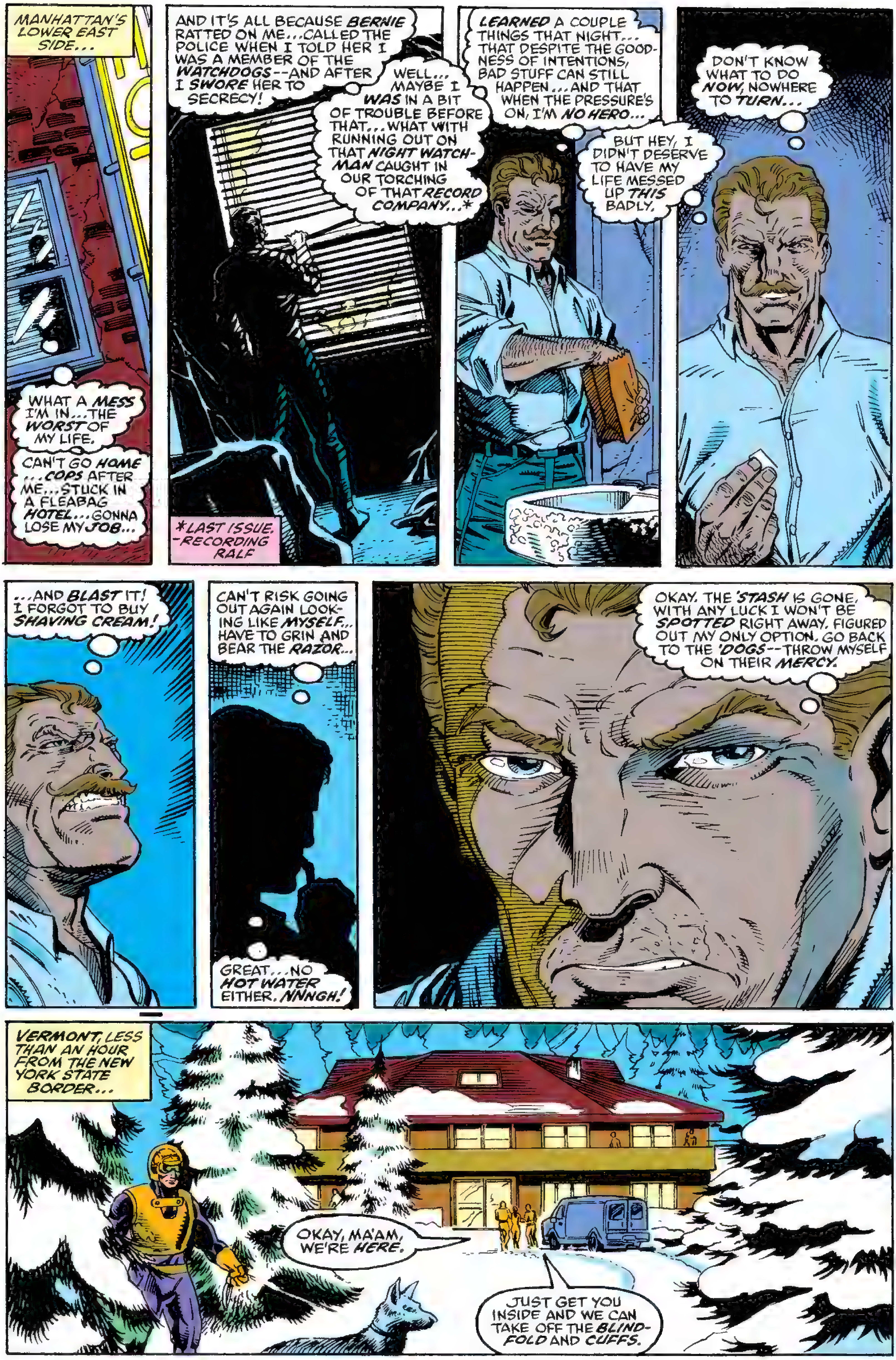

LIKE WE MENTIONED ON THE *CAR PHONE*, TOP-- WE RAN INTO SOME TROUBLE IN BROOKLYN.
IF WE HADN'T GRABBED THIS LADY, *CAPTAIN AMERICA* WOULD'VE BAGGED US!
YOU DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT TAKING A PRISONER!
CAPTAIN AMERICA--!?! HOW'D HE--?
DUNNO, SIR.
AND THE *MISSION*...?
SCRUBBED. MIKE FARREL IS STILL OUT THERE, BLABBIN' AWAY.
MIKE, WHAT GOT *INTO* YOU, GETTING INVOLVED WITH NUTS LIKE THESE?
HMMM. OUR SWORN DUTY IS TO FORTIFY THE *MORALS* OF AMERICAN SOCIETY, NOT TO KIDNAP *INNOCENTS*.
TAKE HER SOMEWHERE FAR FROM HERE AND *LET HER GO*.
BUT, TOP--THIS CHICK IS FARREL'S *FRIEND*. WE MAY BE ABLE TO USE HER TO *BAIT* A TRAP FOR HIM.
YOU'RE *RIGHT*. OKAY, TAKE HER TO *THE LODGE* FOR SAFEKEEPING. SHE CAN AUDIT OUR CURRICULUM. I'LL CALL, LET 'EM KNOW YOU'RE *COMING*.
YOU HOUNDS DID *GOOD*. DISMISSED.
I CAN'T *BELIEVE* THEY WERE ALMOST GOING TO LET ME GO. WHAT'S THIS *LODGE* THEY'RE GOING TO TAKE ME TO?
OH, HOW DO I GET *INTO* THESE THINGS?

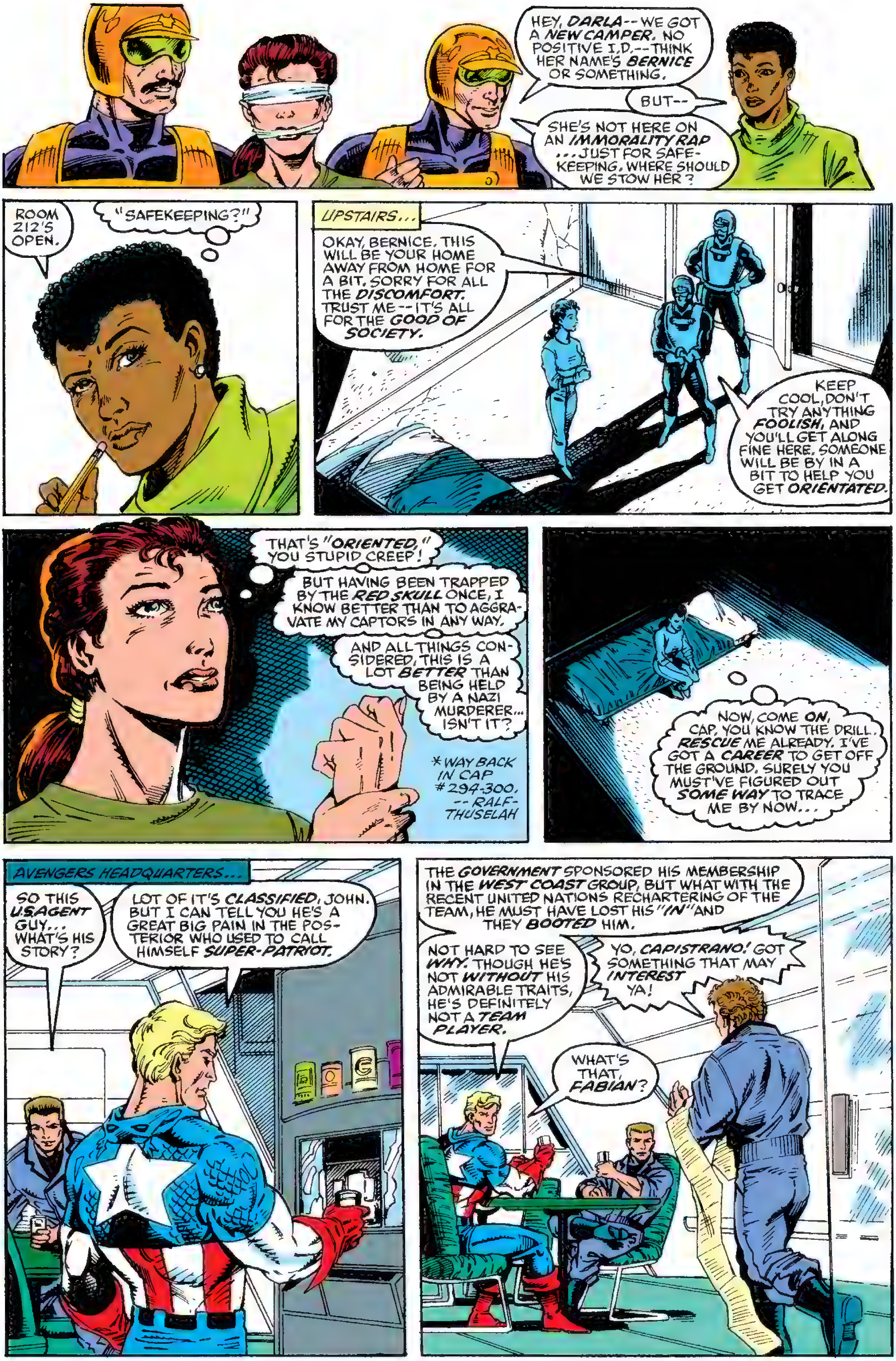

ELSEWHERE...
KTANG
KTUNG
THAT MAKES TWENTY-FIVE DODGES AND THIRTY-SEVEN DEFLECTS AND I'VE BARELY BROKEN A *SWEAT*--
--LET ALONE RELEASED ANY OF THE *TENSION* CAUSED BY LETTING THOSE WATCHDOGS GET AWAY WITH *BERNIE* A FEW HOURS AGO!

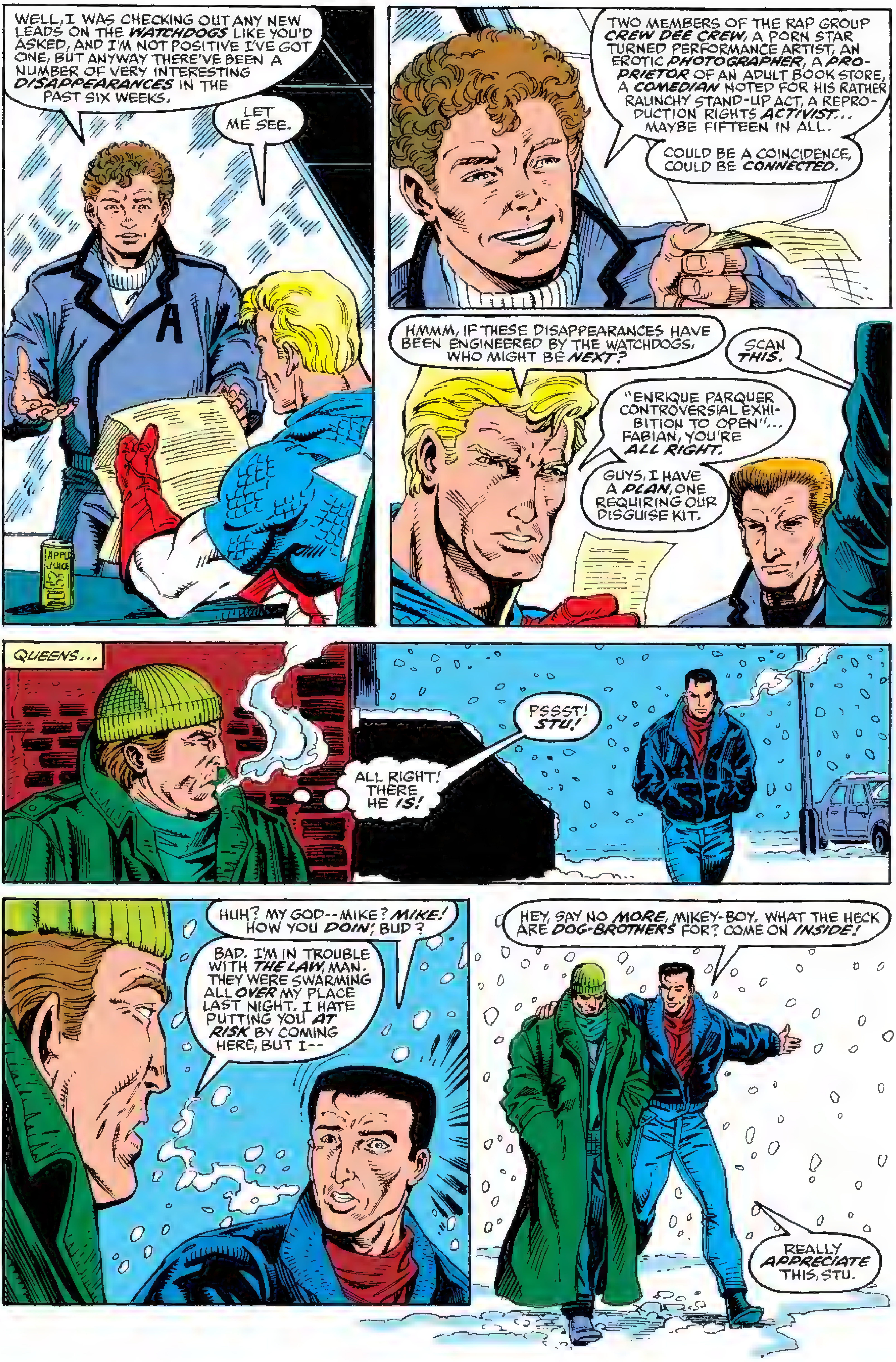

THE WATCHDOGS ARE *NEW* TO THIS AREA. OUR DATABASE HAS NEXT TO *NOTHING* OF ANY USE TO ME TRYING TO TRACK THEM DOWN HERE.
NOT SURE *WHAT* STEP TO TAKE NEXT--
--EXCEPT WAIT AROUND TILL I GET A *LEAD.*
KTONG
CAP MUST REALLY BE *FRUSTRATED.* HE'S HAD ME TURN UP THE COMBAT SIMULATOR TO *MAXIMUM WORKOUT.*
KTOOM
WONDER WHAT IT'S LIKE TO HAVE A *PHYSIQUE* LIKE HIS--
--AND HAVE TO WORK OUT *CONSTANTLY* IN ORDER TO KEEP FROM LOSING THE *SLIGHTEST EDGE?*
I WISH I--
PARDON THE INTRUSION, *COLONEL JAMESON.* BUT COULD YOU PLEASE TURN OFF THE *SYSTEM?* THE CAPTAIN HAS A *VISITOR.*
?!?
NO NEED, COLONEL. LEAVE IT ON.
HEY, OLD-TIMER. COMING *AT* YOU.

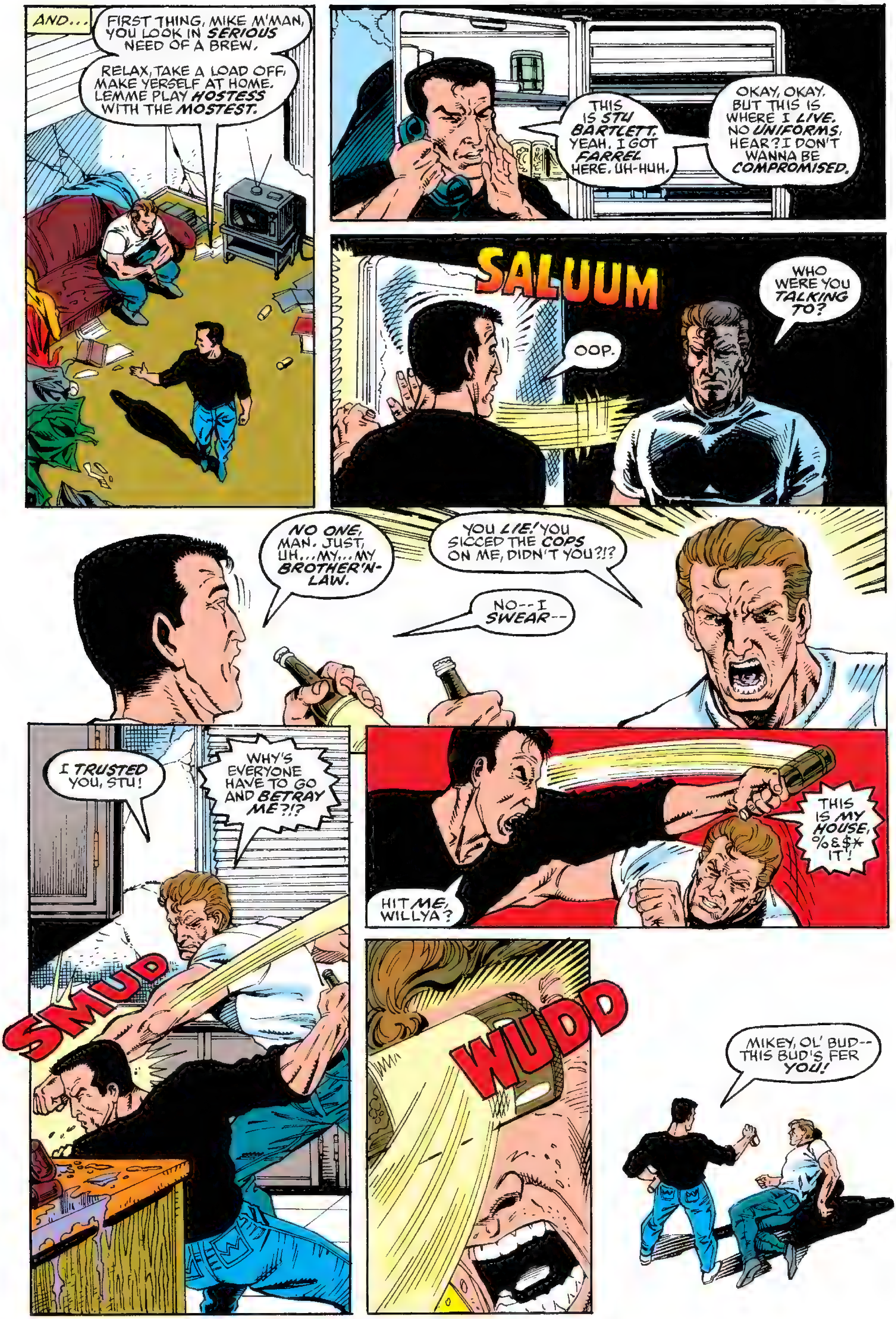

U.S.AGENT--?
WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING HERE?
I HEARD ON THE RADIO THAT THE *WATCHDOGS* HAVE BECOME ACTIVE HERE.
WHAT DO YOU *KNOW* ABOUT IT?
IT'S TRUE. I HAD A *RUN-IN* WITH THEM JUST LAST NIGHT.
AS A MATTER OF FACT, THEY'RE HOLDING *HOSTAGE* AN ACQUAINTANCE OF MINE.
HMH! I'D LIKE IN ON THE *TRACK-DOWN.*
SORRY, AGENT. I WOULD PREFER TO HANDLE THE MATTER *ALONE.*
I'VE READ *USAGENT'S FILE.* I KNOW HE'S *KILLED* A NUMBER OF WATCHDOGS "IN THE LINE OF DUTY," IT SAYS... AND THAT THEY'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATHS OF HIS *PARENTS.*
THE *LAST* THING I NEED IS HAVING TO BABY-SIT A VENGEANCE-DRIVEN *POWDER-KEG* LIKE THE AGENT ON A SENSITIVE *RESCUE MISSION!*

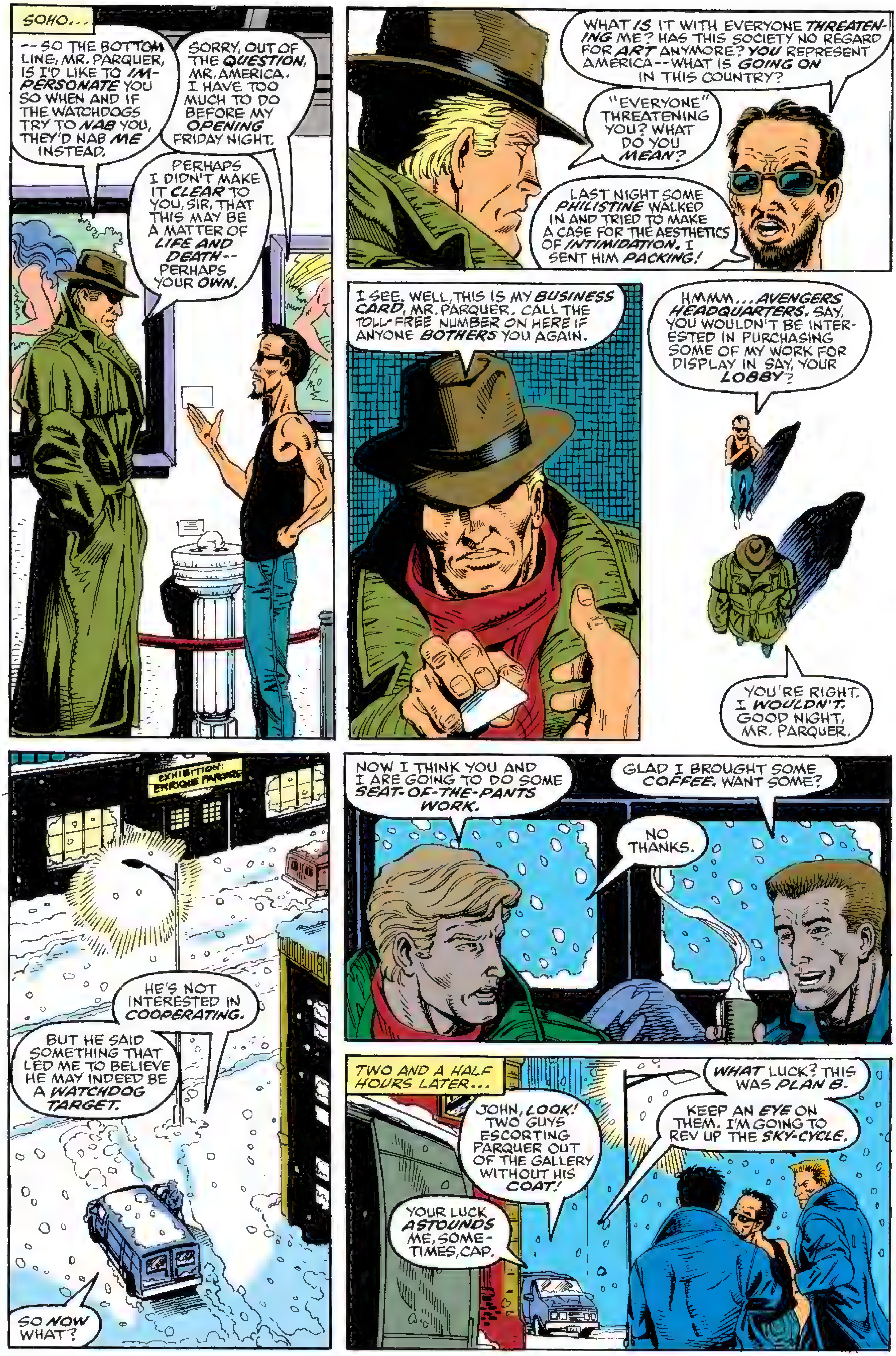

I'M NOT ASKING, CAPTAIN. I'M TELLING YOU. I WANT IN.
LOOK, I'M LEADER OF THE AVENGERS HERE. I DECIDE WHO GOES ON ALL MISSIONS WITHIN MY JURISDICTION.
KWANG
I DON'T WANT YOU IN.
UH-OH. BETTER SHUT OFF THE SIMULATOR. THINGS ARE GETTING HAIRY IN THERE.
CHK CHK CHK
YOU HAVE NO SAY OVER ME ANYMORE, CAPTAIN. I'M NO LONGER AN AVENGER. YOUR WEST COAST TEAM VOTED ME OUT TWO DAYS AGO.*
WOULD IT BE RUDE TO SUGGEST YOU KEEP UP ON YOUR PAPERWORK?
IF YOU'RE NO LONGER AN AVENGER, YOU HAVE NO BUSINESS BEING HERE. LEAVE VOLUNTARILY OR I'LL HAVE YOU ESCORTED ...FORCIBLY.
*TRUE. SEE AVENGERS WEST COAST #69. --RALF
LET'S GET THIS STRAIGHT, CAPTAIN. YOU DON'T LIKE ME, I DON'T LIKE YOU.
BUT I DO RESPECT YOU, AND I KNOW BETTER THAN ANY MAN ALIVE TODAY HOW THAT COSTUME OF YOURS TENDS TO BIND YOU WHERE THE SUN DON'T SHINE.
YOU OWE ME A FAVOR, MAN, FOR SAVING YOUR BUTT FROM THAT RED SKULL LOOKALIKE IN D.C.* I'M CALLING IT DUE.
*SEE CAP #350. --R.
U.S.AGENT, I WOULD THINK YOU'D BEEN AN AVENGER LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT'S NOT HOW THINGS WORK.
I'M NOT ABOUT TO JEOPARDIZE A MISSION WHERE A LIFE'S AT STAKE BY DEALING IN SOMEBODY I'VE NEVER WORKED WITH AS WELL AS SOMEBODY WITH A REPUTATION FOR GETTING OUT OF HAND.
DO I MAKE MYSELF CLEAR?

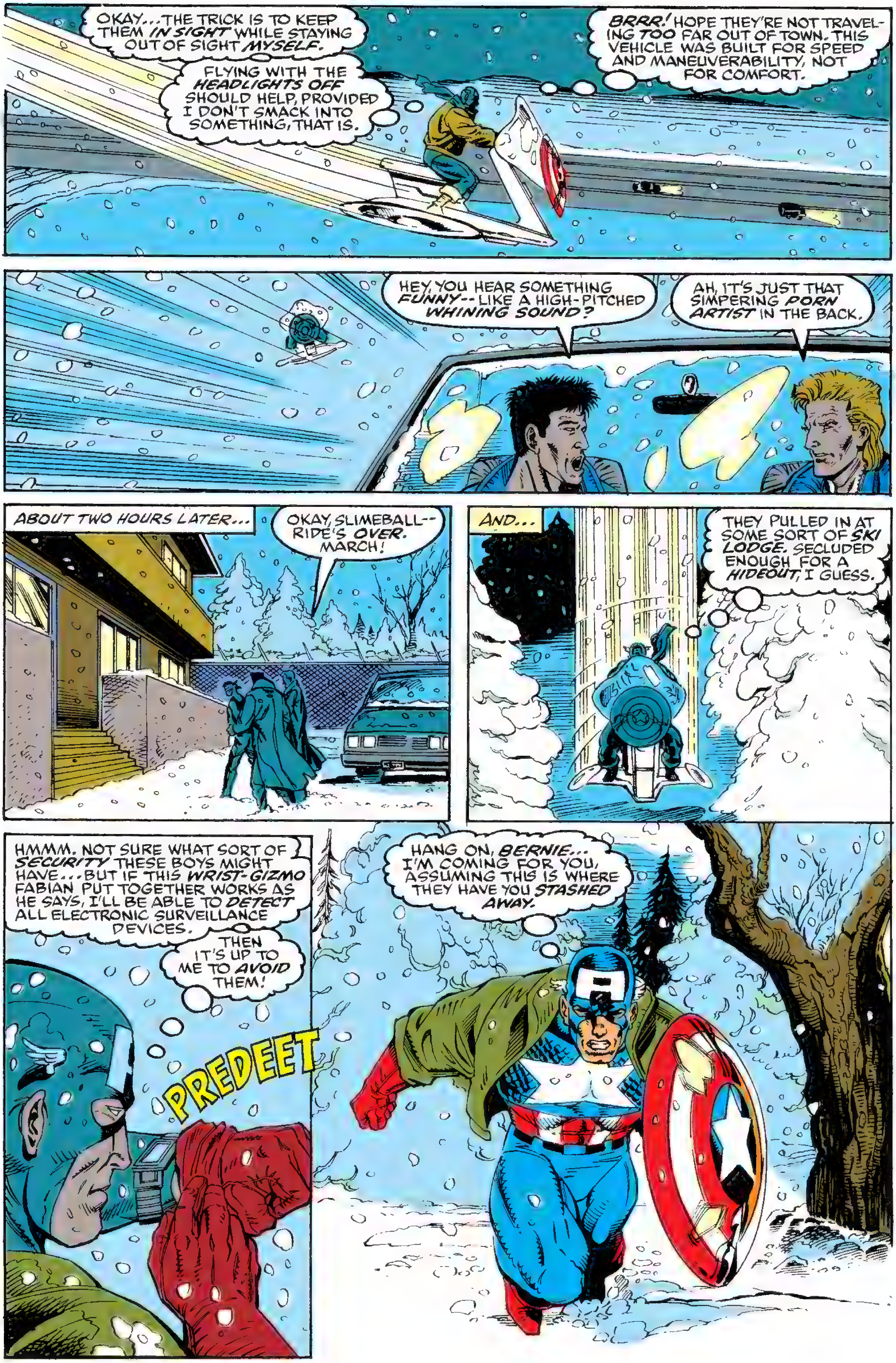

MANHATTAN'S LOWER EAST SIDE...
WHAT A MESS I'M IN...THE WORST OF MY LIFE.
CAN'T GO HOME ...COPS AFTER ME...STUCK IN A FLEABAG HOTEL...GONNA LOSE MY JOB...
AND IT'S ALL BECAUSE BERNIE RATTED ON ME...CALLED THE POLICE WHEN I TOLD HER I WAS A MEMBER OF THE WATCHDOGS--AND AFTER I SWORE HER TO SECRECY!
WELL... MAYBE I WAS IN A BIT OF TROUBLE BEFORE THAT...WHAT WITH RUNNING OUT ON THAT NIGHT WATCHMAN CAUGHT IN OUR TORCHING OF THAT RECORD COMPANY...*
*LAST ISSUE. -RECORDING RALF
LEARNED A COUPLE THINGS THAT NIGHT... THAT DESPITE THE GOODNESS OF INTENTIONS, BAD STUFF CAN STILL HAPPEN...AND THAT WHEN THE PRESSURE'S ON, I'M NO HERO...
BUT HEY, I DIDN'T DESERVE TO HAVE MY LIFE MESSED UP THIS BADLY.
DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO NOW, NOWHERE TO TURN...
...AND BLAST IT! I FORGOT TO BUY SHAVING CREAM!
CAN'T RISK GOING OUT AGAIN LOOKING LIKE MYSELF... HAVE TO GRIN AND BEAR THE RAZOR...
GREAT...NO HOT WATER EITHER. NNNGH!
OKAY. THE 'STASH IS GONE. WITH ANY LUCK I WON'T BE SPOTTED RIGHT AWAY. FIGURED OUT MY ONLY OPTION. GO BACK TO THE 'DOGS--THROW MYSELF ON THEIR MERCY.
VERMONT, LESS THAN AN HOUR FROM THE NEW YORK STATE BORDER...
OKAY, MA'AM, WE'RE HERE.
JUST GET YOU INSIDE AND WE CAN TAKE OFF THE BLINDFOLD AND CUFFS.

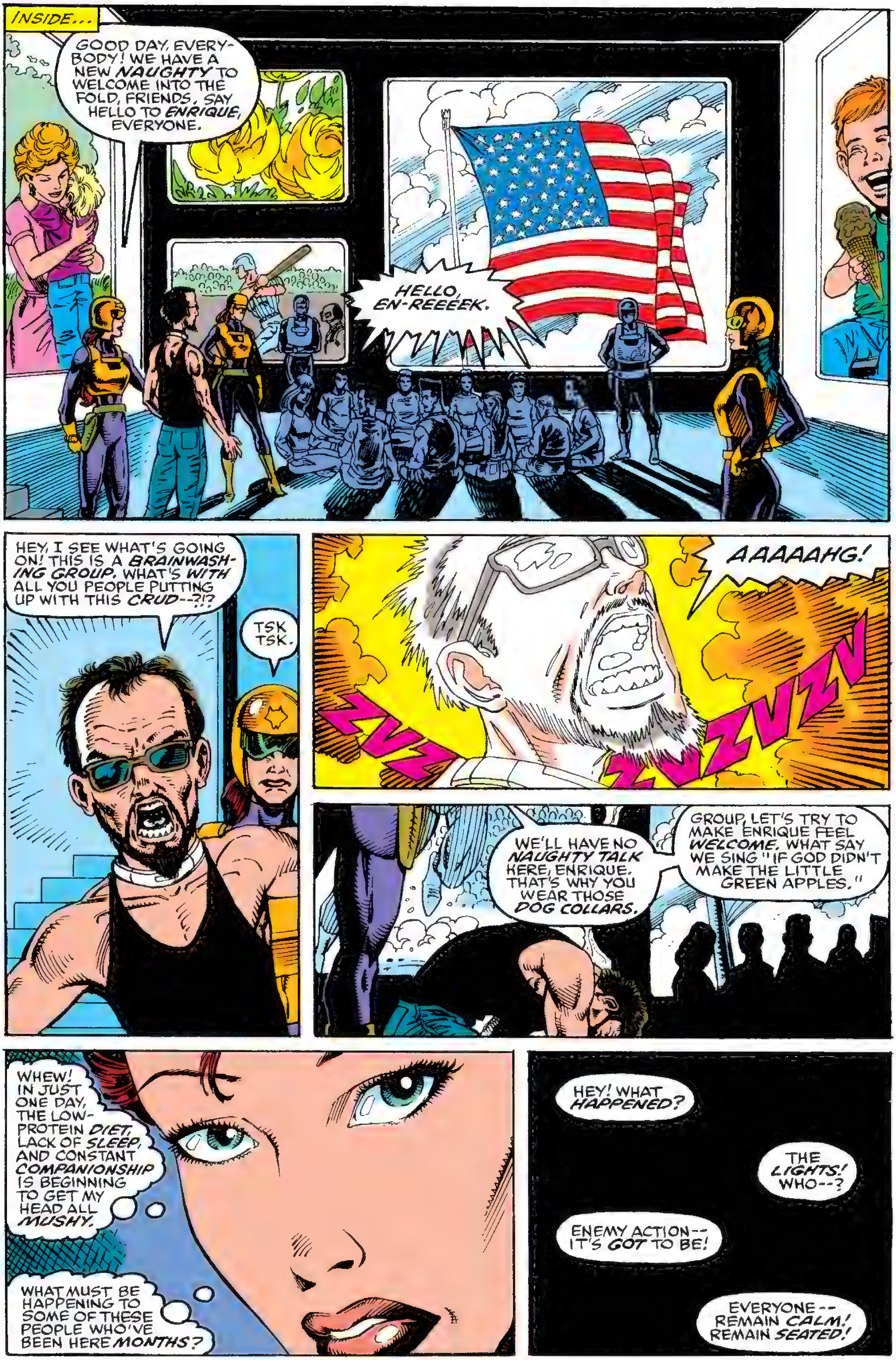

HEY, DARLA-- WE GOT A NEW CAMPER. NO POSITIVE I.D.--THINK HER NAME'S BERNICE OR SOMETHING.
BUT--
SHE'S NOT HERE ON AN IMMORALITY RAP ...JUST FOR SAFEKEEPING. WHERE SHOULD WE STOW HER?
ROOM 212'S OPEN.
"SAFEKEEPING?"
UPSTAIRS...
OKAY, BERNICE. THIS WILL BE YOUR HOME AWAY FROM HOME FOR A BIT. SORRY FOR ALL THE DISCOMFORT. TRUST ME--IT'S ALL FOR THE GOOD OF SOCIETY.
KEEP COOL, DON'T TRY ANYTHING FOOLISH, AND YOU'LL GET ALONG FINE HERE. SOMEONE WILL BE BY IN A BIT TO HELP YOU GET ORIENTATED.
THAT'S "ORIENTED," YOU STUPID CREEP!
BUT HAVING BEEN TRAPPED BY THE RED SKULL ONCE, I KNOW BETTER THAN TO AGGRAVATE MY CAPTORS IN ANY WAY.
AND ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, THIS IS A LOT BETTER THAN BEING HELD BY A NAZI MURDERER... ISN'T IT?
*WAY BACK IN CAP #294-300. --RALF-THUSELAH
NOW, COME ON, CAP, YOU KNOW THE DRILL. RESCUE ME ALREADY. I'VE GOT A CAREER TO GET OFF THE GROUND. SURELY YOU MUST'VE FIGURED OUT SOME WAY TO TRACE ME BY NOW...
AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS...
SO THIS U.S.AGENT GUY... WHAT'S HIS STORY?
LOT OF IT'S CLASSIFIED, JOHN. BUT I CAN TELL YOU HE'S A GREAT BIG PAIN IN THE POSTERIOR WHO USED TO CALL HIMSELF SUPER-PATRIOT.
THE GOVERNMENT SPONSORED HIS MEMBERSHIP IN THE WEST COAST GROUP, BUT WHAT WITH THE RECENT UNITED NATIONS RECHARTERING OF THE TEAM, HE MUST HAVE LOST HIS "IN" AND THEY BOOTED HIM.
NOT HARD TO SEE WHY. THOUGH HE'S NOT WITHOUT HIS ADMIRABLE TRAITS, HE'S DEFINITELY NOT A TEAM PLAYER.
YO, CAPISTRANO! GOT SOMETHING THAT MAY INTEREST YA!
WHAT'S THAT, FABIAN?

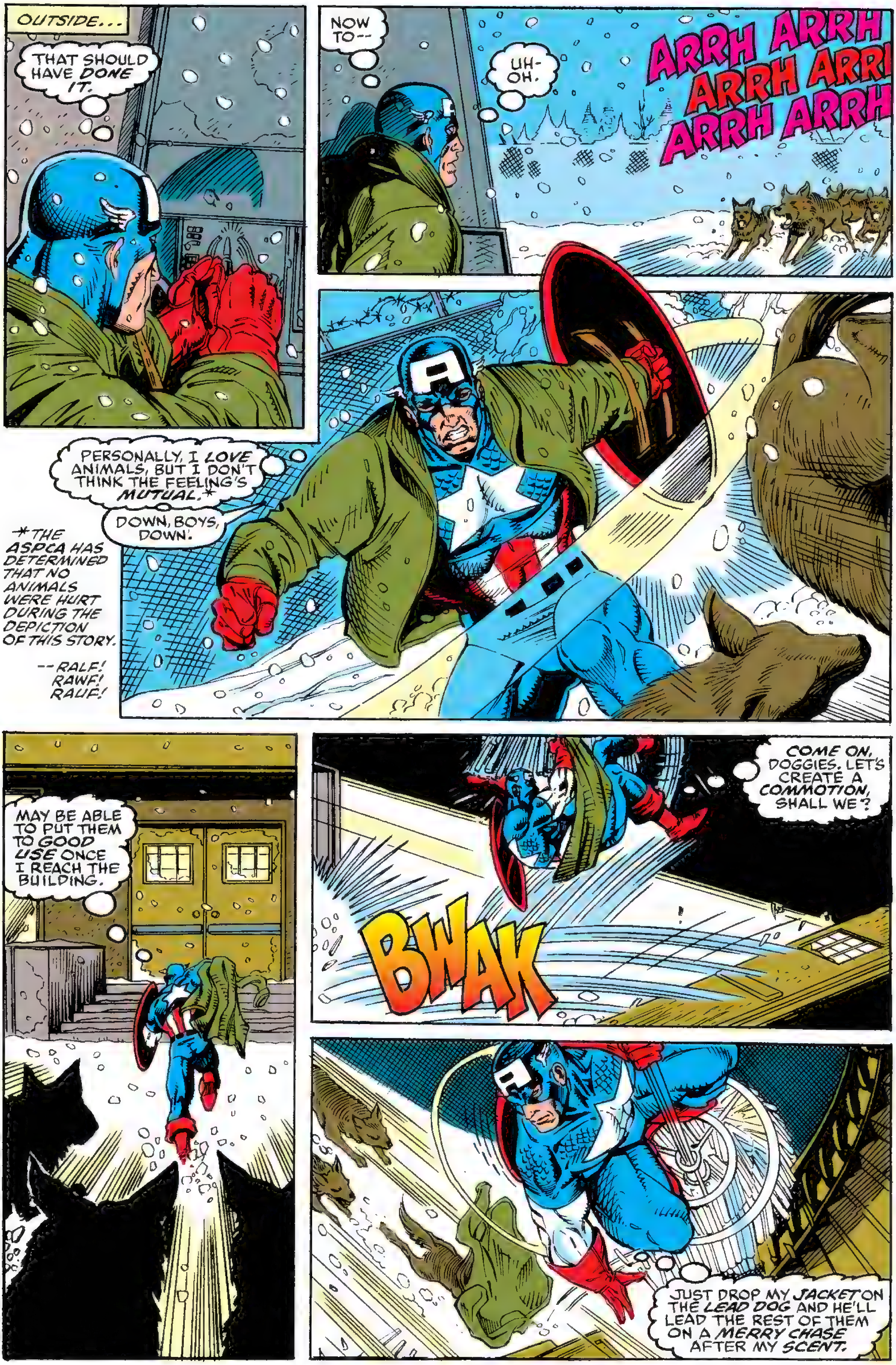

WELL, I WAS CHECKING OUT ANY NEW LEADS ON THE *WATCHDOGS* LIKE YOU'D ASKED, AND I'M NOT POSITIVE I'VE GOT ONE, BUT ANYWAY THERE'VE BEEN A NUMBER OF VERY INTERESTING *DISAPPEARANCES* IN THE PAST SIX WEEKS.
LET ME SEE.
A
APPLE JUICE
TWO MEMBERS OF THE RAP GROUP *CREW DEE CREW*, A PORN STAR TURNED PERFORMANCE ARTIST, AN EROTIC *PHOTOGRAPHER*, A *PROPRIETOR* OF AN ADULT BOOK STORE, A *COMEDIAN* NOTED FOR HIS RATHER RAUNCHY STAND-UP ACT, A REPRODUCTION RIGHTS *ACTIVIST*... MAYBE FIFTEEN IN ALL.
COULD BE A COINCIDENCE, COULD BE *CONNECTED*.
HMMM, IF THESE DISAPPEARANCES HAVE BEEN ENGINEERED BY THE WATCHDOGS, WHO MIGHT BE *NEXT?*
SCAN *THIS*.
"ENRIQUE PARQUER CONTROVERSIAL EXHIBITION TO OPEN"... FABIAN, YOU'RE *ALL RIGHT*.
GUYS, I HAVE A *PLAN*, ONE REQUIRING OUR DISGUISE KIT.
QUEENS...
ALL RIGHT! THERE HE *IS!*
PSSST! *STU!*
HUH? MY GOD--MIKE? *MIKE!* HOW YOU *DOIN'*, BUD?
BAD. I'M IN TROUBLE WITH *THE LAW*, MAN. THEY WERE SWARMING ALL *OVER* MY PLACE LAST NIGHT. I HATE PUTTING YOU *AT RISK* BY COMING HERE, BUT I--
HEY, SAY NO *MORE*, MIKEY-BOY. WHAT THE HECK ARE *DOG-BROTHERS* FOR? COME ON *INSIDE!*
REALLY *APPRECIATE* THIS, STU.

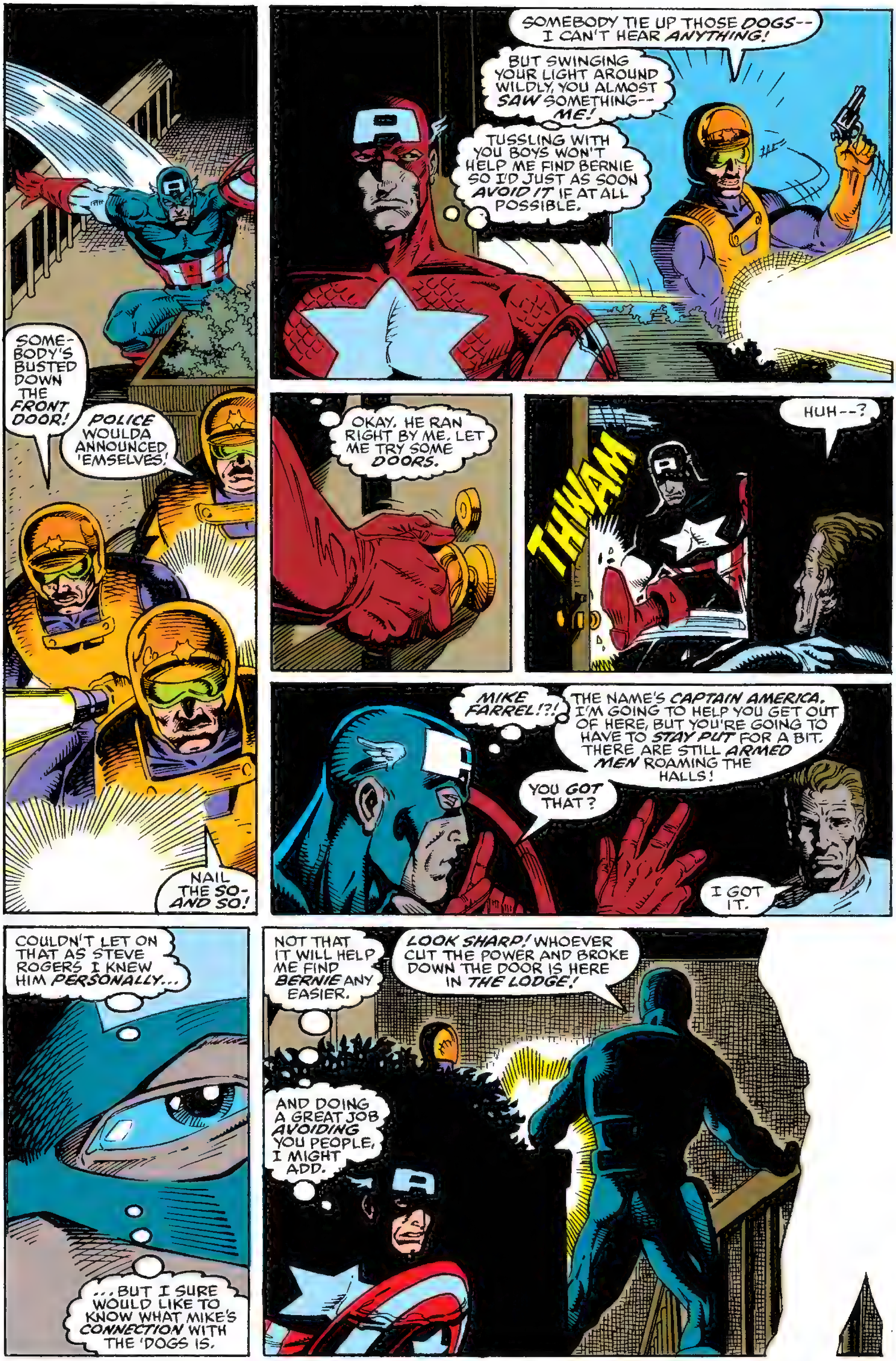

AND...
FIRST THING, MIKE M'MAN, YOU LOOK IN *SERIOUS* NEED OF A BREW.
RELAX, TAKE A LOAD OFF, MAKE YERSELF AT HOME. LEMME PLAY *HOSTESS* WITH THE *MOSTEST*.
THIS IS *STU BARTLETT*. YEAH. I GOT *FARREL* HERE. UH-HUH.
OKAY, OKAY, BUT THIS IS WHERE I *LIVE*. NO *UNIFORMS*, HEAR? I DON'T WANNA BE *COMPROMISED*.
SALUUM
OOP.
WHO WERE YOU *TALKING TO?*
NO ONE, MAN. JUST, UH... MY... MY *BROTHER'N-LAW*.
YOU *LIE!* YOU SICCED THE *COPS* ON ME, DIDN'T YOU?!?
NO--I *SWEAR*--
I *TRUSTED* YOU, STU!
WHY'S EVERYONE HAVE TO GO AND *BETRAY ME?!?*
SMUD
HIT *ME*, WILLYA?
THIS IS *MY HOUSE*, %&$* IT!
WUDD
MIKEY, OL' BUD-- THIS BUD'S FER *YOU!*

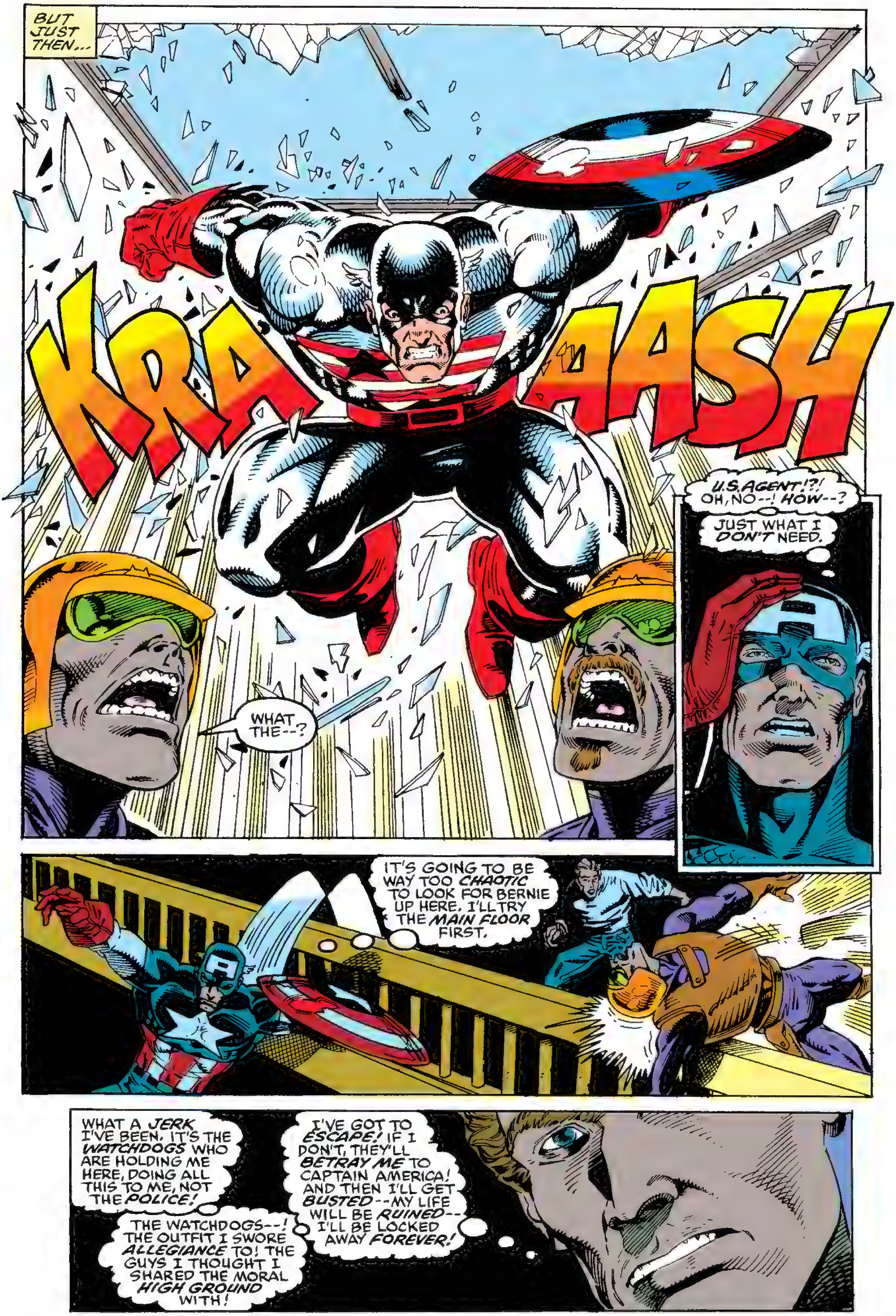

SOHO...
--SO THE BOTTOM LINE, MR. PARQUER, IS I'D LIKE TO *IMPERSONATE* YOU SO WHEN AND IF THE WATCHDOGS TRY TO *NAB* YOU, THEY'D NAB *ME* INSTEAD.
SORRY, OUT OF THE *QUESTION*, MR. AMERICA. I HAVE TOO MUCH TO DO BEFORE MY *OPENING* FRIDAY NIGHT.
PERHAPS I DIDN'T MAKE IT *CLEAR* TO YOU, SIR, THAT THIS MAY BE A MATTER OF *LIFE AND DEATH*-- PERHAPS YOUR *OWN*.
WHAT *IS* IT WITH EVERYONE *THREATENING* ME? HAS THIS SOCIETY NO REGARD FOR *ART* ANYMORE? *YOU* REPRESENT AMERICA--WHAT IS *GOING ON* IN THIS COUNTRY?
"EVERYONE" THREATENING YOU? WHAT DO YOU *MEAN*?
LAST NIGHT SOME *PHILISTINE* WALKED IN AND TRIED TO MAKE A CASE FOR THE AESTHETICS OF *INTIMIDATION*. I SENT HIM *PACKING*!
I SEE. WELL, THIS IS MY *BUSINESS CARD*, MR. PARQUER. CALL THE TOLL-FREE NUMBER ON HERE IF ANYONE *BOTHERS* YOU AGAIN.
HMMM... *AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS*. SAY, YOU WOULDN'T BE INTERESTED IN PURCHASING SOME OF MY WORK FOR DISPLAY IN, SAY, YOUR *LOBBY*?
YOU'RE RIGHT. I *WOULDN'T*. GOOD NIGHT, MR. PARQUER.
EXHIBITION: ENRIQUE PARQUER
HE'S NOT INTERESTED IN *COOPERATING*.
BUT HE SAID SOMETHING THAT LED ME TO BELIEVE HE MAY INDEED BE A *WATCHDOG TARGET*.
SO *NOW* WHAT?
NOW I THINK YOU AND I ARE GOING TO DO SOME *SEAT-OF-THE-PANTS WORK*.
GLAD I BROUGHT SOME *COFFEE*. WANT SOME?
NO THANKS.
TWO AND A HALF HOURS LATER...
JOHN, *LOOK!* TWO GUYS ESCORTING PARQUER OUT OF THE GALLERY WITHOUT HIS *COAT!*
YOUR LUCK *ASTOUNDS* ME, SOMETIMES, CAP.
WHAT LUCK? THIS WAS *PLAN B*.
KEEP AN *EYE* ON THEM. I'M GOING TO REV UP THE *SKY-CYCLE*.

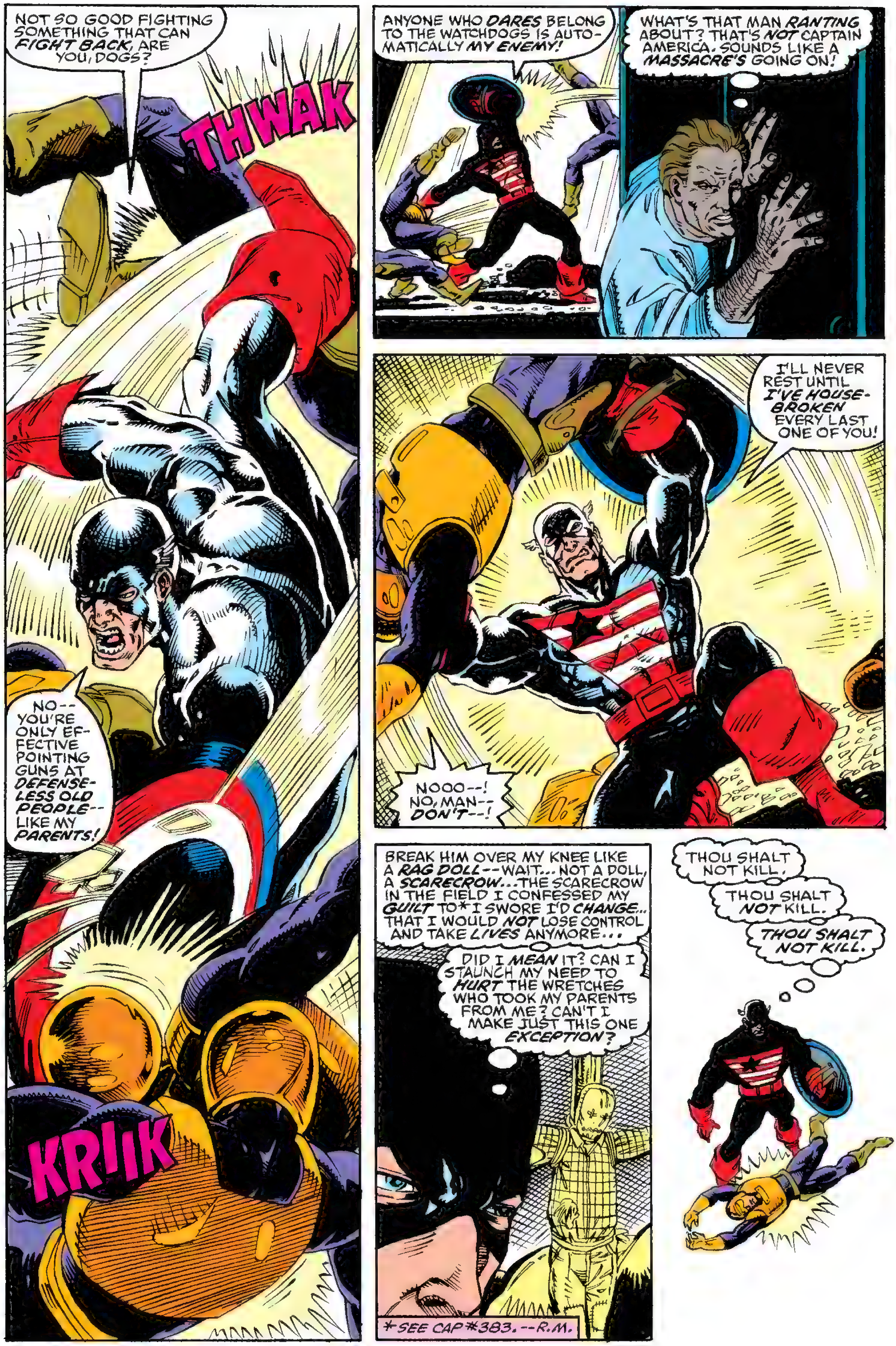

OKAY... THE TRICK IS TO KEEP THEM *IN SIGHT* WHILE STAYING OUT OF SIGHT *MYSELF*.
FLYING WITH THE *HEADLIGHTS OFF* SHOULD HELP, PROVIDED I DON'T SMACK INTO SOMETHING, THAT IS.
BRRR! HOPE THEY'RE NOT TRAVELING *TOO* FAR OUT OF TOWN. THIS VEHICLE WAS BUILT FOR SPEED AND MANEUVERABILITY, NOT FOR COMFORT.
HEY, YOU HEAR SOMETHING *FUNNY*-- LIKE A HIGH-PITCHED *WHINING SOUND?*
AH, IT'S JUST THAT SIMPERING *PORN ARTIST* IN THE BACK.
ABOUT TWO HOURS LATER...
OKAY, SLIMEBALL-- RIDE'S *OVER*. MARCH!
AND...
THEY PULLED IN AT SOME SORT OF *SKI LODGE*. SECLUDED ENOUGH FOR A *HIDEOUT*, I GUESS.
HMMM. NOT SURE WHAT SORT OF *SECURITY* THESE BOYS MIGHT HAVE... BUT IF THIS *WRIST-GIZMO* FABIAN PUT TOGETHER WORKS AS HE SAYS, I'LL BE ABLE TO *DETECT* ALL ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE DEVICES.
THEN IT'S UP TO ME TO *AVOID* THEM!
PREDEET
HANG ON, *BERNIE*... I'M COMING FOR YOU, ASSUMING THIS IS WHERE THEY HAVE YOU *STASHED AWAY*.

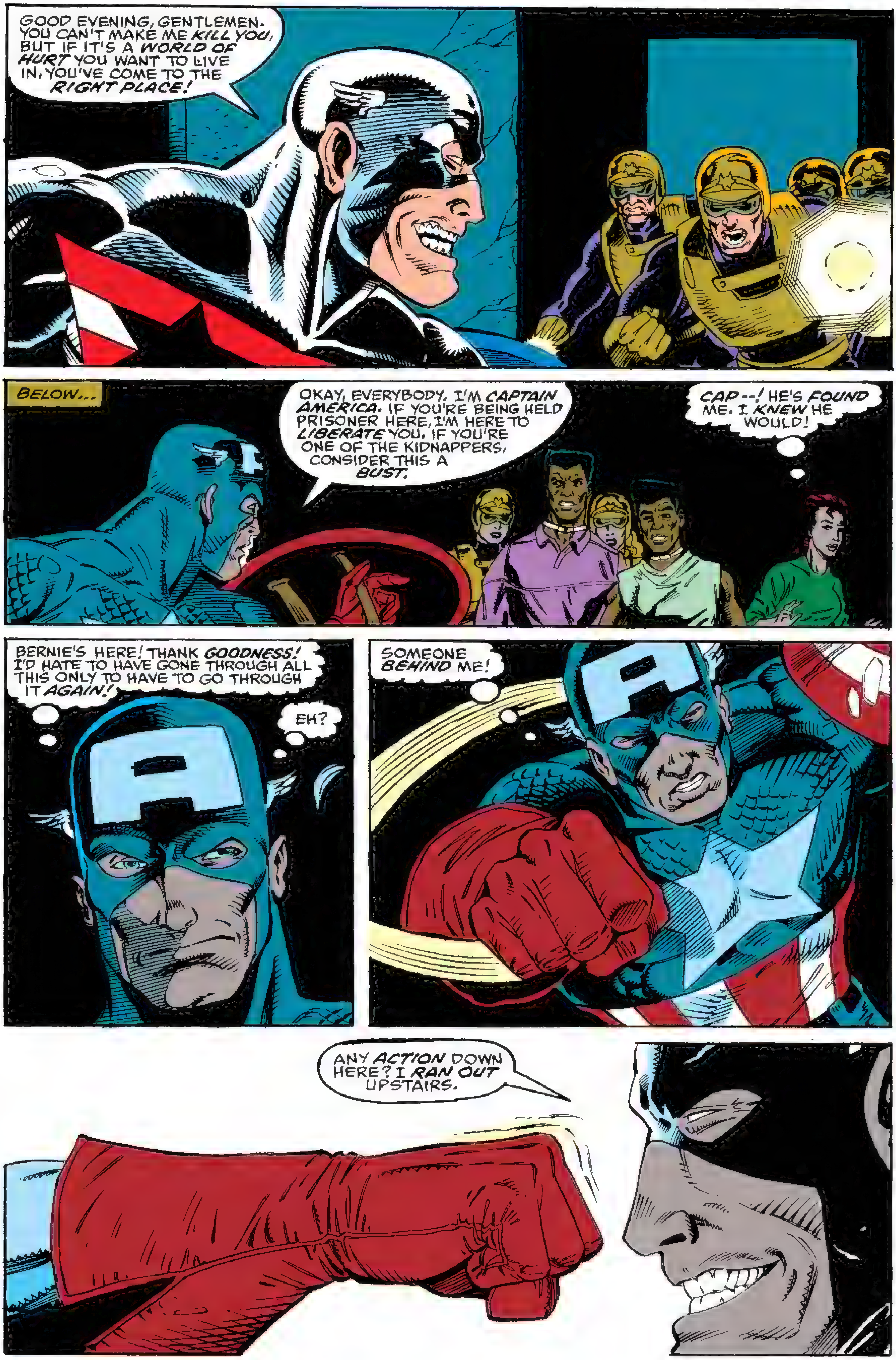

INSIDE...
GOOD DAY, EVERYBODY! WE HAVE A NEW *NAUGHTY* TO WELCOME INTO THE FOLD, FRIENDS. SAY HELLO TO *ENRIQUE*, EVERYONE.
HELLO, EN-REEEEK.
HEY, I SEE WHAT'S GOING ON! THIS IS A *BRAINWASHING GROUP*. WHAT'S *WITH* ALL YOU PEOPLE PUTTING UP WITH THIS *CRUD*--?!?
TSK TSK.
AAAAAHG!
ZVZ ZVZVZV
WE'LL HAVE NO *NAUGHTY TALK* HERE, ENRIQUE. THAT'S WHY YOU WEAR THOSE *DOG COLLARS*.
GROUP, LET'S TRY TO MAKE ENRIQUE FEEL *WELCOME*. WHAT SAY WE SING "IF GOD DIDN'T MAKE THE LITTLE GREEN APPLES."
WHEW! IN JUST ONE DAY, THE LOW-PROTEIN *DIET*, LACK OF *SLEEP*, AND CONSTANT *COMPANIONSHIP* IS BEGINNING TO GET MY HEAD ALL *MUSHY*.
WHAT MUST BE HAPPENING TO SOME OF THESE PEOPLE WHO'VE BEEN HERE *MONTHS*?
HEY! WHAT *HAPPENED*?
THE *LIGHTS!* WHO--?
ENEMY ACTION-- IT'S *GOT* TO BE!
EVERYONE-- REMAIN *CALM!* REMAIN *SEATED!*

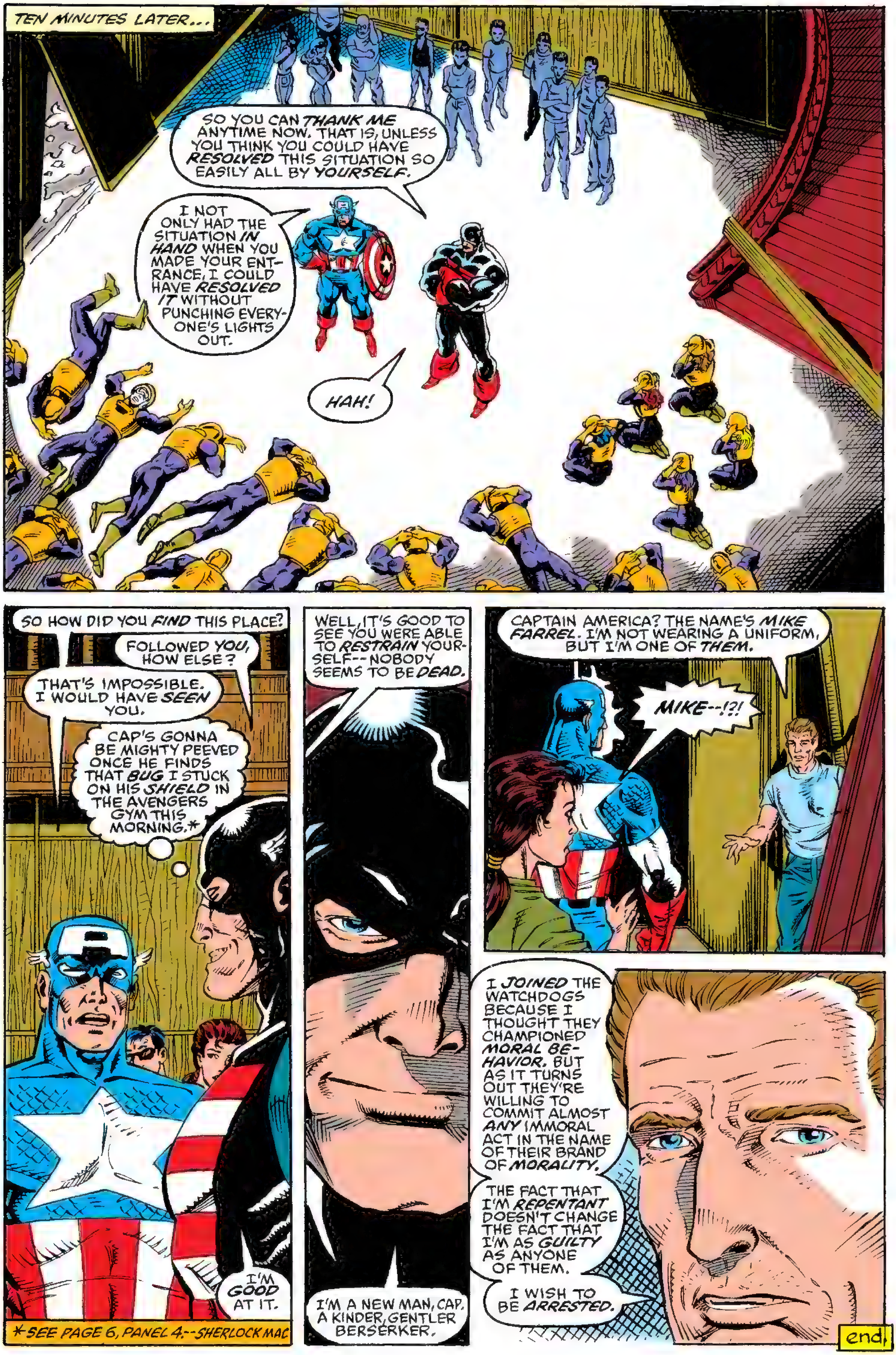

OUTSIDE...
THAT SHOULD HAVE *DONE IT.*
NOW TO--
UH-OH.
ARRH ARRH ARRH ARRH ARRH ARRH
PERSONALLY, I *LOVE* ANIMALS, BUT I DON'T THINK THE FEELING'S *MUTUAL.**
DOWN, BOYS, DOWN!
*THE ASPCA HAS DETERMINED THAT NO ANIMALS WERE HURT DURING THE DEPICTION OF THIS STORY. --RALF! RAWF! RAUF!
MAY BE ABLE TO PUT THEM TO *GOOD USE* ONCE I REACH THE BUILDING.
COME ON, DOGGIES. LET'S CREATE A COMMOTION, SHALL WE?
BWAK
JUST DROP MY *JACKET* ON THE *LEAD DOG* AND HE'LL LEAD THE REST OF THEM ON A *MERRY CHASE* AFTER MY *SCENT.*

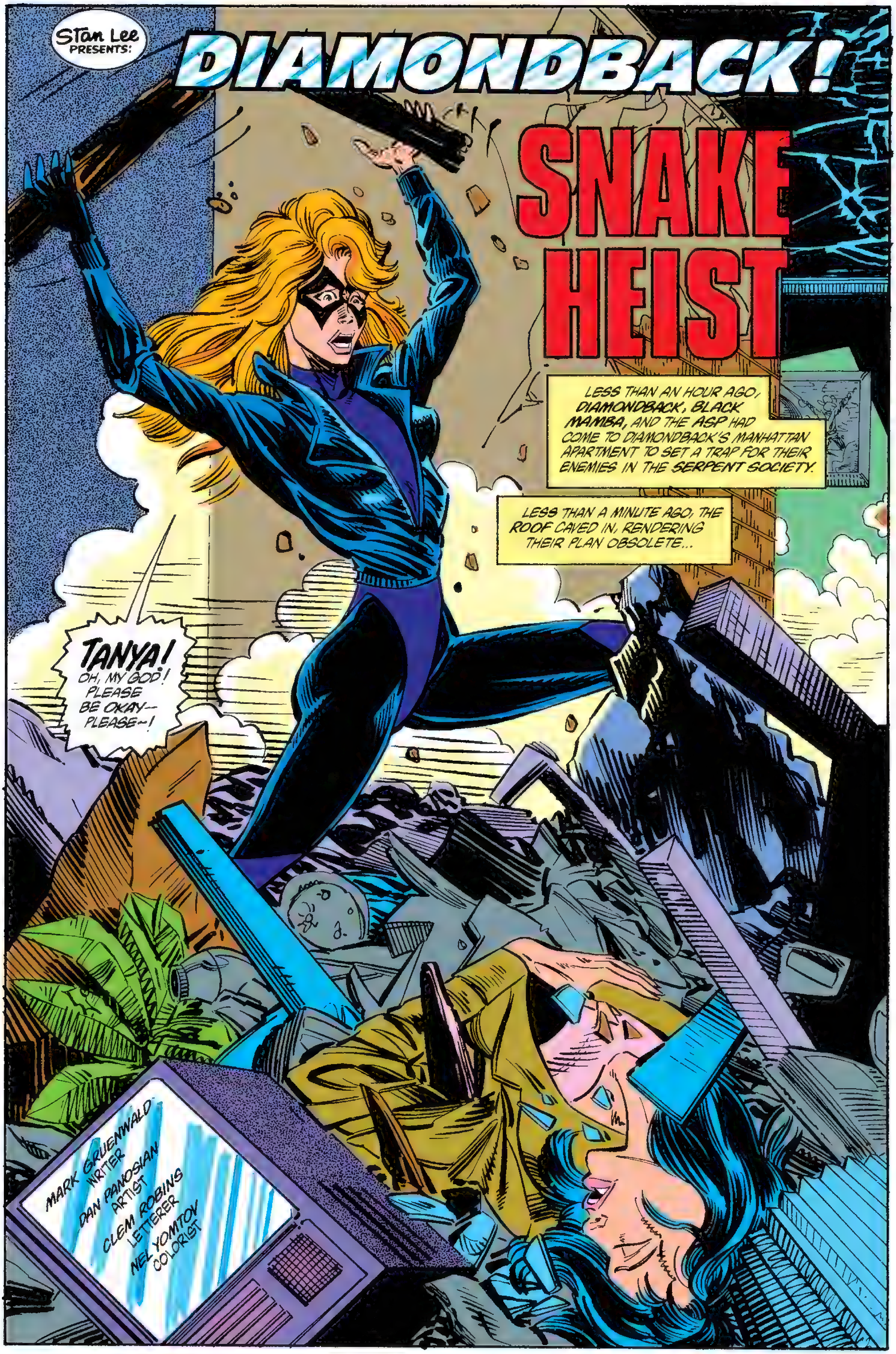

SOMEBODY'S BUSTED DOWN THE FRONT DOOR!
POLICE WOULDA ANNOUNCED 'EMSELVES!
NAIL THE SO-AND SO!
SOMEBODY TIE UP THOSE DOGS-- I CAN'T HEAR ANYTHING!
BUT SWINGING YOUR LIGHT AROUND WILDLY, YOU ALMOST SAW SOMETHING-- ME!
TUSSLING WITH YOU BOYS WON'T HELP ME FIND BERNIE SO I'D JUST AS SOON AVOID IT IF AT ALL POSSIBLE.
OKAY, HE RAN RIGHT BY ME. LET ME TRY SOME DOORS.
THWAM
HUH--?
MIKE FARREL!?!
THE NAME'S CAPTAIN AMERICA. I'M GOING TO HELP YOU GET OUT OF HERE, BUT YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO STAY PUT FOR A BIT. THERE ARE STILL ARMED MEN ROAMING THE HALLS!
YOU GOT THAT?
I GOT IT.
COULDN'T LET ON THAT AS STEVE ROGERS I KNEW HIM PERSONALLY...
...BUT I SURE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHAT MIKE'S CONNECTION WITH THE 'DOGS IS.
NOT THAT IT WILL HELP ME FIND BERNIE ANY EASIER.
LOOK SHARP! WHOEVER CUT THE POWER AND BROKE DOWN THE DOOR IS HERE IN THE LODGE!
AND DOING A GREAT JOB AVOIDING YOU PEOPLE, I MIGHT ADD.

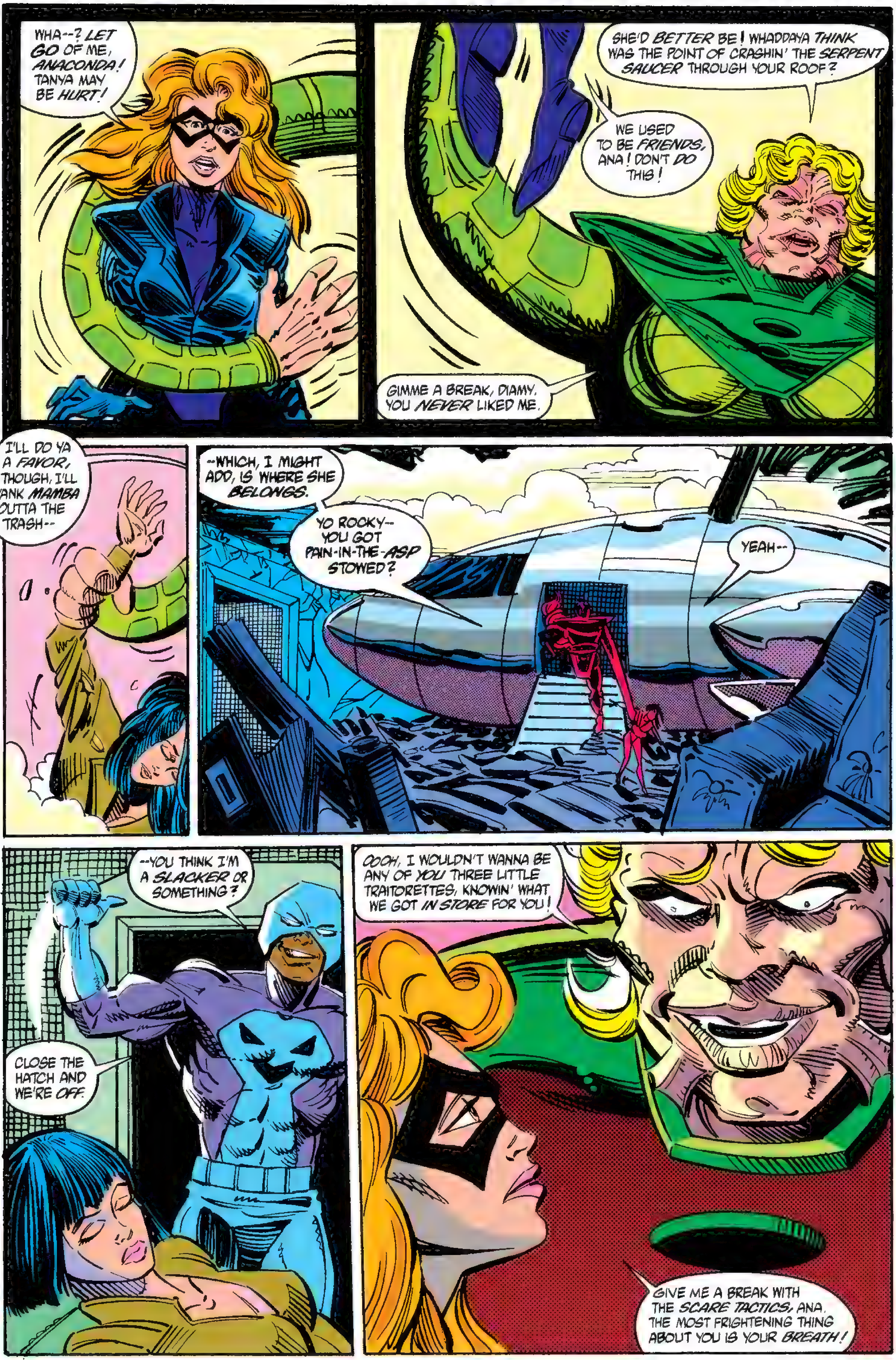

BUT JUST THEN...
KRAAASH
WHAT THE--?
U.S. AGENT!?! OH, NO--! HOW--?
JUST WHAT I DON'T NEED.
IT'S GOING TO BE WAY TOO CHAOTIC TO LOOK FOR BERNIE UP HERE. I'LL TRY THE MAIN FLOOR FIRST.
WHAT A JERK I'VE BEEN. IT'S THE WATCHDOGS WHO ARE HOLDING ME HERE, DOING ALL THIS TO ME, NOT THE POLICE!
THE WATCHDOGS--! THE OUTFIT I SWORE ALLEGIANCE TO! THE GUYS I THOUGHT I SHARED THE MORAL HIGH GROUND WITH!
I'VE GOT TO ESCAPE! IF I DON'T, THEY'LL BETRAY ME TO CAPTAIN AMERICA! AND THEN I'LL GET BUSTED--MY LIFE WILL BE RUINED--I'LL BE LOCKED AWAY FOREVER!

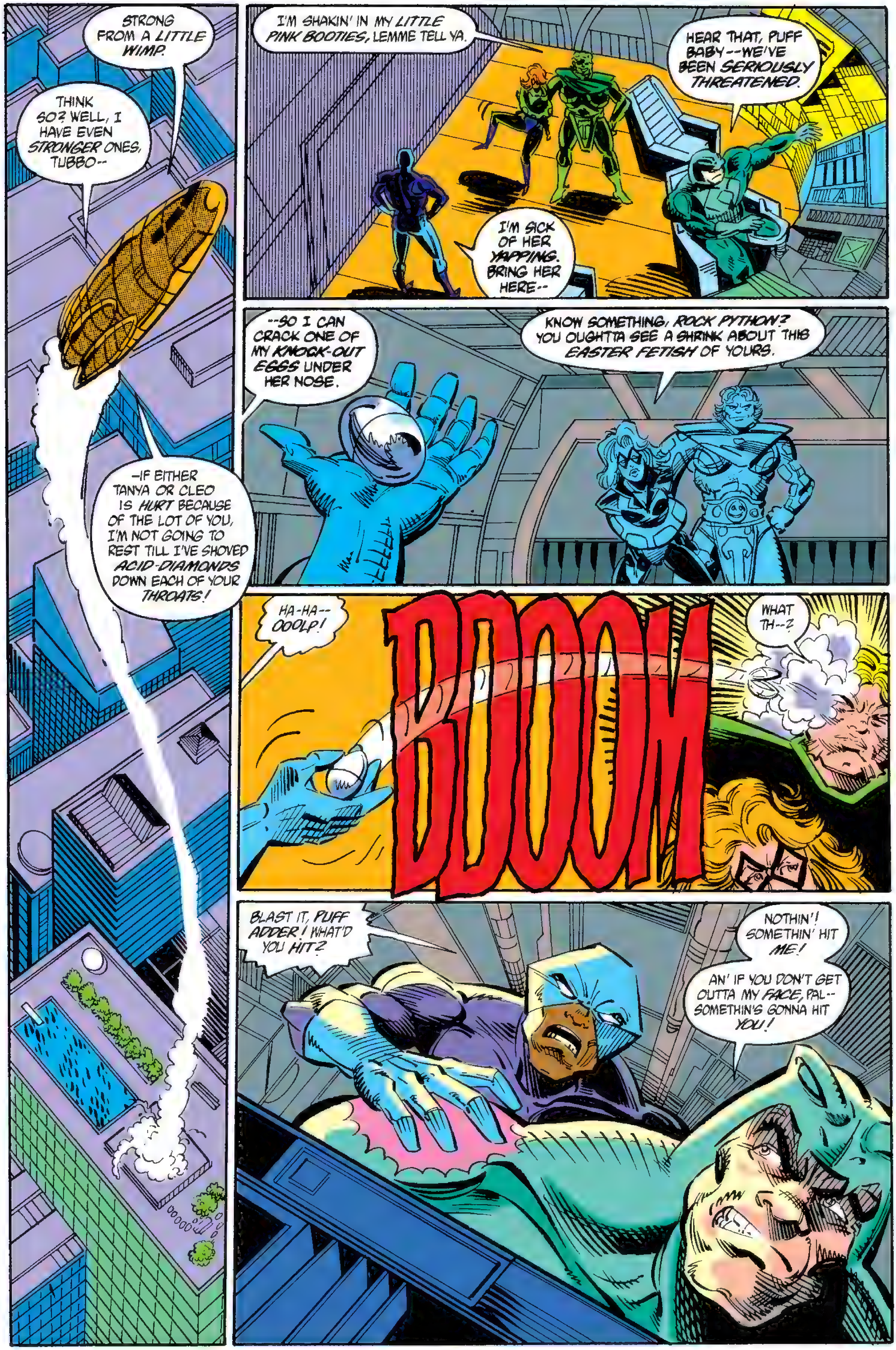

NOT SO GOOD FIGHTING SOMETHING THAT CAN *FIGHT BACK*, ARE YOU, DOGS?
THWAK
NO--YOU'RE ONLY EFFECTIVE POINTING GUNS AT *DEFENSELESS OLD PEOPLE*--LIKE MY *PARENTS!*
KRIIK
ANYONE WHO *DARES* BELONG TO THE WATCHDOGS IS AUTOMATICALLY *MY ENEMY!*
WHAT'S THAT MAN *RANTING* ABOUT? THAT'S *NOT* CAPTAIN AMERICA. SOUNDS LIKE A *MASSACRE'S* GOING ON!
I'LL NEVER REST UNTIL *I'VE HOUSEBROKEN* EVERY LAST ONE OF YOU!
NOOO--! NO, MAN--*DON'T*--!
BREAK HIM OVER MY KNEE LIKE A *RAG DOLL*--WAIT... NOT A DOLL, A *SCARECROW*...THE SCARECROW IN THE FIELD I CONFESSED MY *GUILT* TO* I SWORE I'D *CHANGE*... THAT I WOULD *NOT* LOSE CONTROL AND TAKE *LIVES* ANYMORE...
DID I *MEAN* IT? CAN I STAUNCH MY NEED TO *HURT* THE WRETCHES WHO TOOK MY PARENTS FROM ME? CAN'T I MAKE JUST THIS ONE *EXCEPTION?*
*SEE CAP #383. --R.M.
THOU SHALT NOT KILL.
THOU SHALT *NOT* KILL.
THOU SHALT NOT KILL.

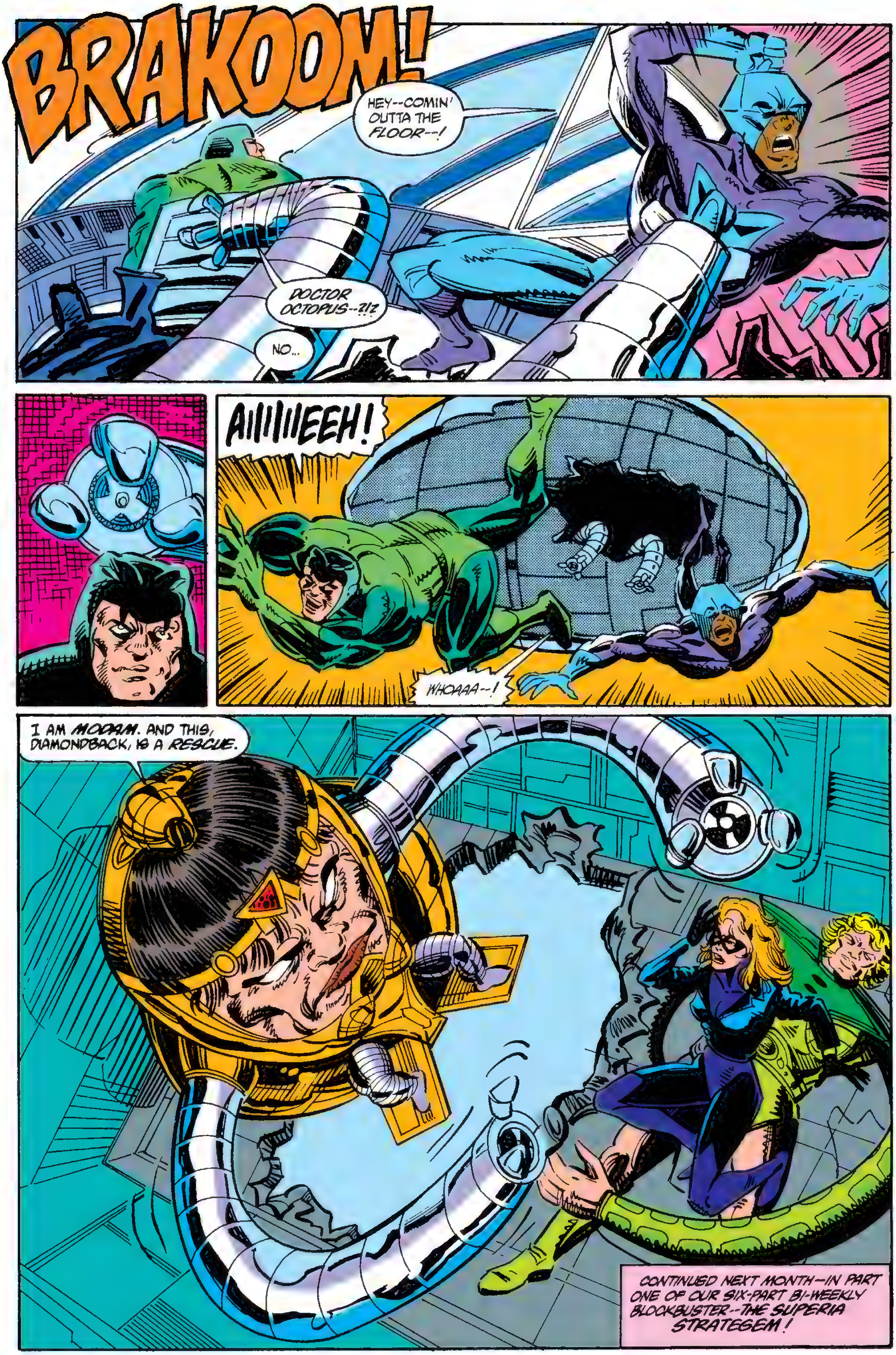

GOOD EVENING, GENTLEMEN. YOU CAN'T MAKE ME KILL YOU, BUT IF IT'S A WORLD OF HURT YOU WANT TO LIVE IN, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE!
BELOW...
OKAY, EVERYBODY. I'M CAPTAIN AMERICA. IF YOU'RE BEING HELD PRISONER HERE, I'M HERE TO LIBERATE YOU. IF YOU'RE ONE OF THE KIDNAPPERS, CONSIDER THIS A BUST.
CAP--! HE'S FOUND ME. I KNEW HE WOULD!
BERNIE'S HERE! THANK GOODNESS! I'D HATE TO HAVE GONE THROUGH ALL THIS ONLY TO HAVE TO GO THROUGH IT AGAIN!
EH?
SOMEONE BEHIND ME!
ANY ACTION DOWN HERE? I RAN OUT UPSTAIRS.


TEN MINUTES LATER...
SO YOU CAN *THANK ME* ANYTIME NOW. THAT IS, UNLESS YOU THINK YOU COULD HAVE *RESOLVED* THIS SITUATION SO EASILY ALL BY *YOURSELF*.
I NOT ONLY HAD THE SITUATION *IN HAND* WHEN YOU MADE YOUR ENTRANCE, I COULD HAVE *RESOLVED IT* WITHOUT PUNCHING EVERYONE'S LIGHTS OUT.
HAH!
SO HOW DID YOU *FIND* THIS PLACE?
FOLLOWED *YOU*, HOW ELSE?
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. I WOULD HAVE *SEEN* YOU.
CAP'S GONNA BE MIGHTY PEEVED ONCE HE FINDS THAT *BUG* I STUCK ON HIS *SHIELD* IN THE AVENGERS GYM THIS MORNING.*
I'M *GOOD* AT IT.
*SEE PAGE 6, PANEL 4.--SHERLOCK MAC
WELL, IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU WERE ABLE TO *RESTRAIN* YOURSELF--NOBODY SEEMS TO BE *DEAD*.
I'M A NEW MAN, CAP. A KINDER, GENTLER BERSERKER.
CAPTAIN AMERICA? THE NAME'S *MIKE FARREL*. I'M NOT WEARING A UNIFORM, BUT I'M ONE OF *THEM*.
MIKE--!?!
I *JOINED* THE WATCHDOGS BECAUSE I THOUGHT THEY CHAMPIONED *MORAL BEHAVIOR*. BUT AS IT TURNS OUT THEY'RE WILLING TO COMMIT ALMOST *ANY* IMMORAL ACT IN THE NAME OF THEIR BRAND OF *MORALITY*.
THE FACT THAT I'M *REPENTANT* DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT I'M AS *GUILTY* AS ANYONE OF THEM.
I WISH TO BE *ARRESTED*.
end


Stan Lee PRESENTS:
DIAMONDBACK!
SNAKE HEIST
LESS THAN AN HOUR AGO, DIAMONDBACK, BLACK MAMBA, AND THE ASP HAD COME TO DIAMONDBACK'S MANHATTAN APARTMENT TO SET A TRAP FOR THEIR ENEMIES IN THE SERPENT SOCIETY.
LESS THAN A MINUTE AGO, THE ROOF CAVED IN, RENDERING THEIR PLAN OBSOLETE...
TANYA! OH, MY GOD! PLEASE BE OKAY-- PLEASE--!
MARK GRUENWALD WRITER
DAN PANOSIAN ARTIST
CLEM ROBINS LETTERER
NEL YOMTOV COLORIST


WHA--? LET GO OF ME, ANACONDA! TANYA MAY BE HURT!
SHE'D BETTER BE! WHADDAYA THINK WAS THE POINT OF CRASHIN' THE SERPENT SAUCER THROUGH YOUR ROOF?
WE USED TO BE FRIENDS, ANA! DON'T DO THIS!
GIMME A BREAK, DIAMY. YOU NEVER LIKED ME.
I'LL DO YA A FAVOR, THOUGH. I'LL YANK MAMBA OUTTA THE TRASH--
--WHICH, I MIGHT ADD, IS WHERE SHE BELONGS.
YO ROCKY-- YOU GOT PAIN-IN-THE-ASP STOWED?
YEAH--
--YOU THINK I'M A SLACKER OR SOMETHING?
CLOSE THE HATCH AND WE'RE OFF.
OOOH, I WOULDN'T WANNA BE ANY OF YOU THREE LITTLE TRAITORETTES, KNOWIN' WHAT WE GOT IN STORE FOR YOU!
GIVE ME A BREAK WITH THE SCARE TACTICS, ANA. THE MOST FRIGHTENING THING ABOUT YOU IS YOUR BREATH!


STRONG FROM A LITTLE WIMP.
THINK SO? WELL, I HAVE EVEN STRONGER ONES, TUBBO--
--IF EITHER TANYA OR CLEO IS HURT BECAUSE OF THE LOT OF YOU, I'M NOT GOING TO REST TILL I'VE SHOVED ACID-DIAMONDS DOWN EACH OF YOUR THROATS!
I'M SHAKIN' IN MY LITTLE PINK BOOTIES, LEMME TELL YA.
HEAR THAT, PUFF BABY--WE'VE BEEN SERIOUSLY THREATENED.
I'M SICK OF HER YAPPING. BRING HER HERE--
--SO I CAN CRACK ONE OF MY KNOCK-OUT EGGS UNDER HER NOSE.
KNOW SOMETHING, ROCK PYTHON? YOU OUGHTTA SEE A SHRINK ABOUT THIS EASTER FETISH OF YOURS.
HA-HA--OOOLP!
BDOOM
WHAT TH--?
BLAST IT, PUFF ADDER! WHAT'D YOU HIT?
NOTHIN'! SOMETHIN' HIT ME!
AN' IF YOU DON'T GET OUTTA MY FACE, PAL--SOMETHIN'S GONNA HIT YOU!


BRAKOOM!
HEY--COMIN' OUTTA THE *FLOOR*--!
DOCTOR OCTOPUS--?!?
NO...
AIIIIEEH!
WHOAAA--!
I AM *MODAM*. AND THIS, DIAMONDBACK, IS A *RESCUE*.
CONTINUED NEXT MONTH--IN PART ONE OF OUR SIX-PART BI-WEEKLY BLOCKBUSTER--*THE SUPERIA STRATEGEM!*

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CAPTAIN AMERICA®
MIGNOLA

THE VON STRUCKER GAMBIT

PART 3

FEATURING:

CAPTAIN AMERICA

Origin ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ pg 2

Call of Duty (Von Strucker Gambit Pt.3) ◆◆◆ pg 4

Brothers ◆◆◆ pg 29

Forgive Us Our Trespasses ◆◆◆ pg 38

Worth Fighting For ◆◆◆ pg 47

Pin-ups ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ pg 59

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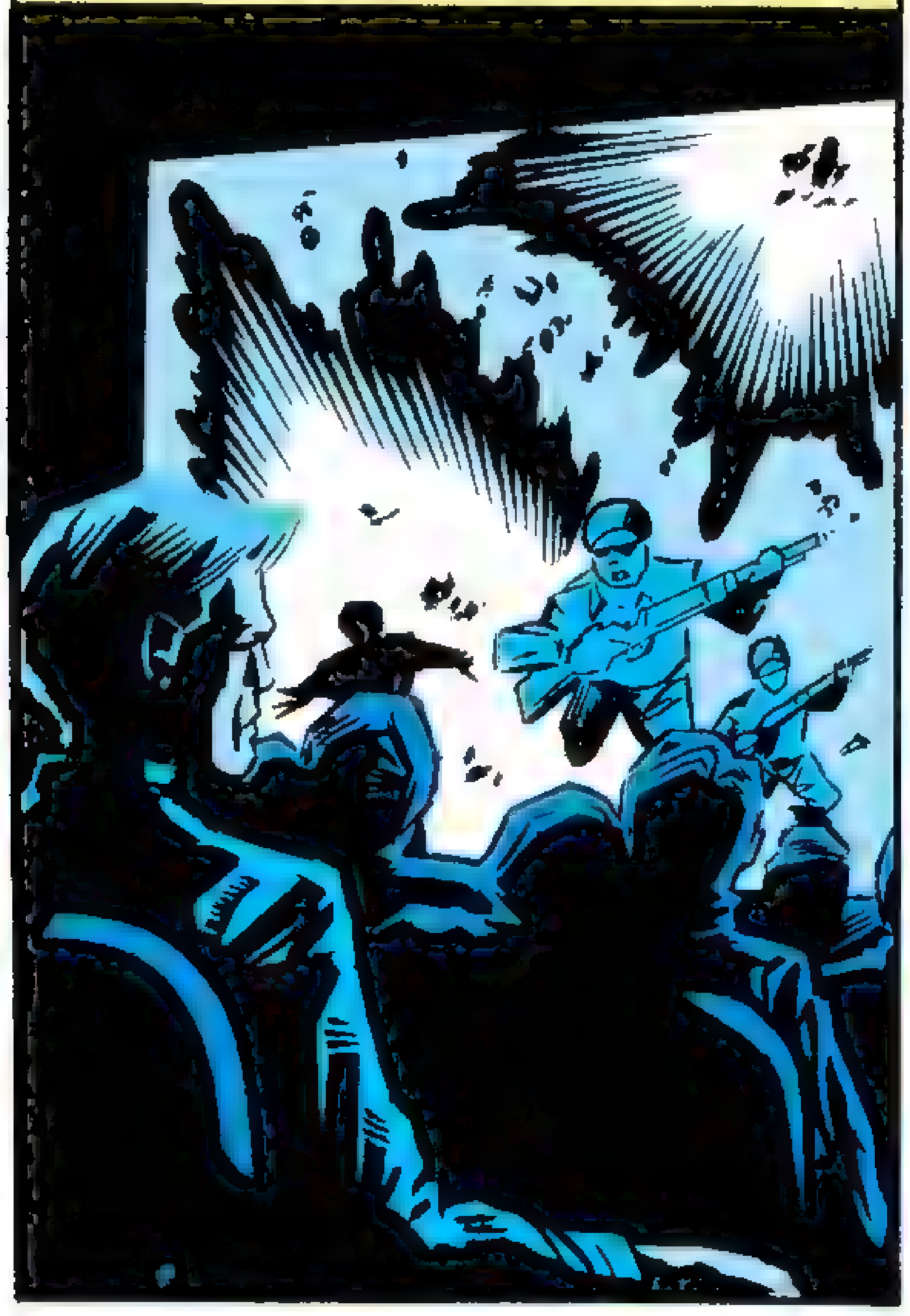
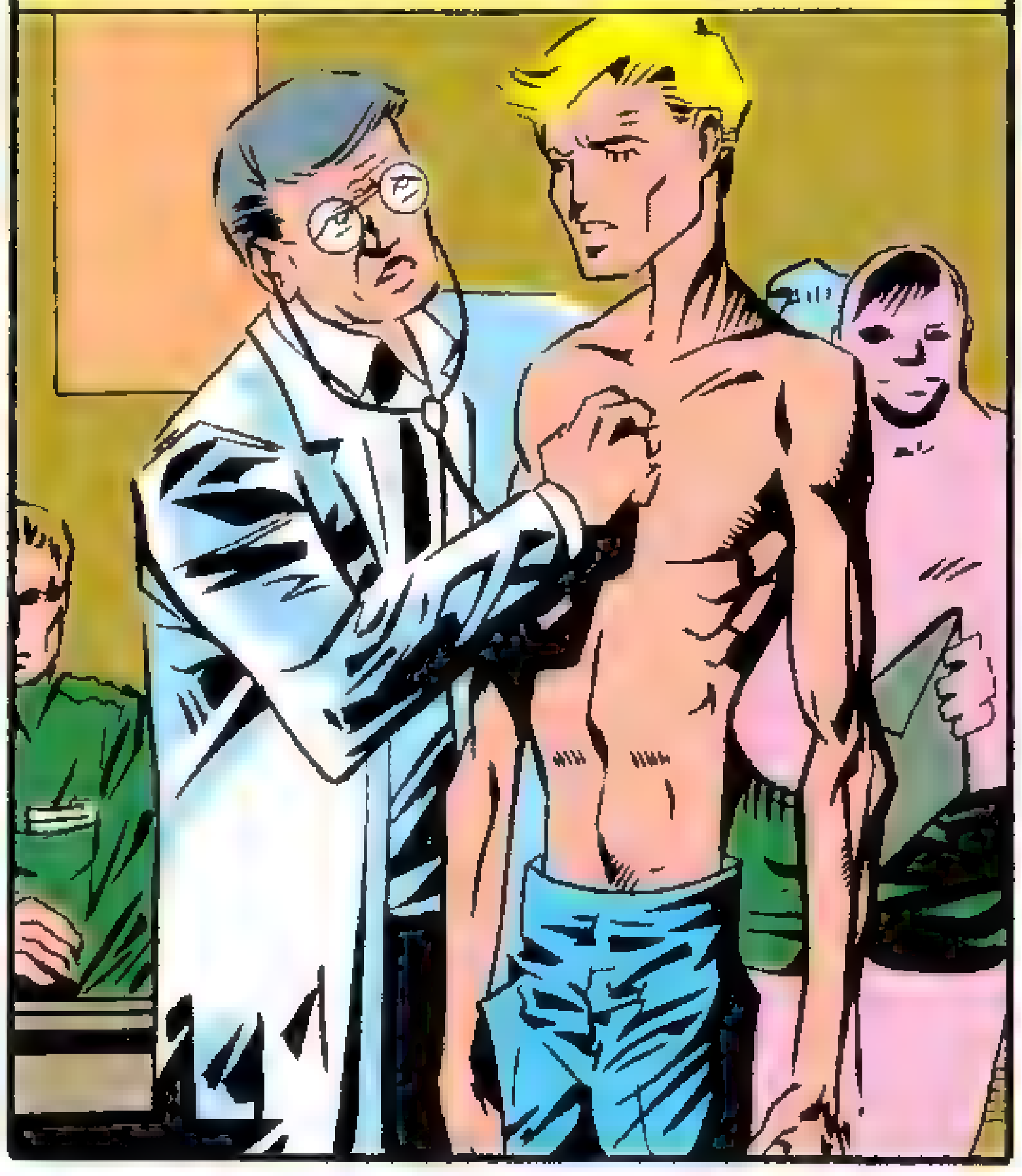
THE ORIGIN OF CAPTAIN AMERICA

1940... AS THE WORLD TREMBLED ON THE BRINK OF GLOBAL WAR, EIGHTEEN YEAR OLD STEVEN ROGERS SAT IN A MOVIE THEATER, HIS BLOOD QUICKENING AT THE SIGHT OF NEWSREEL FOOTAGE OF WARTORN EUROPE...



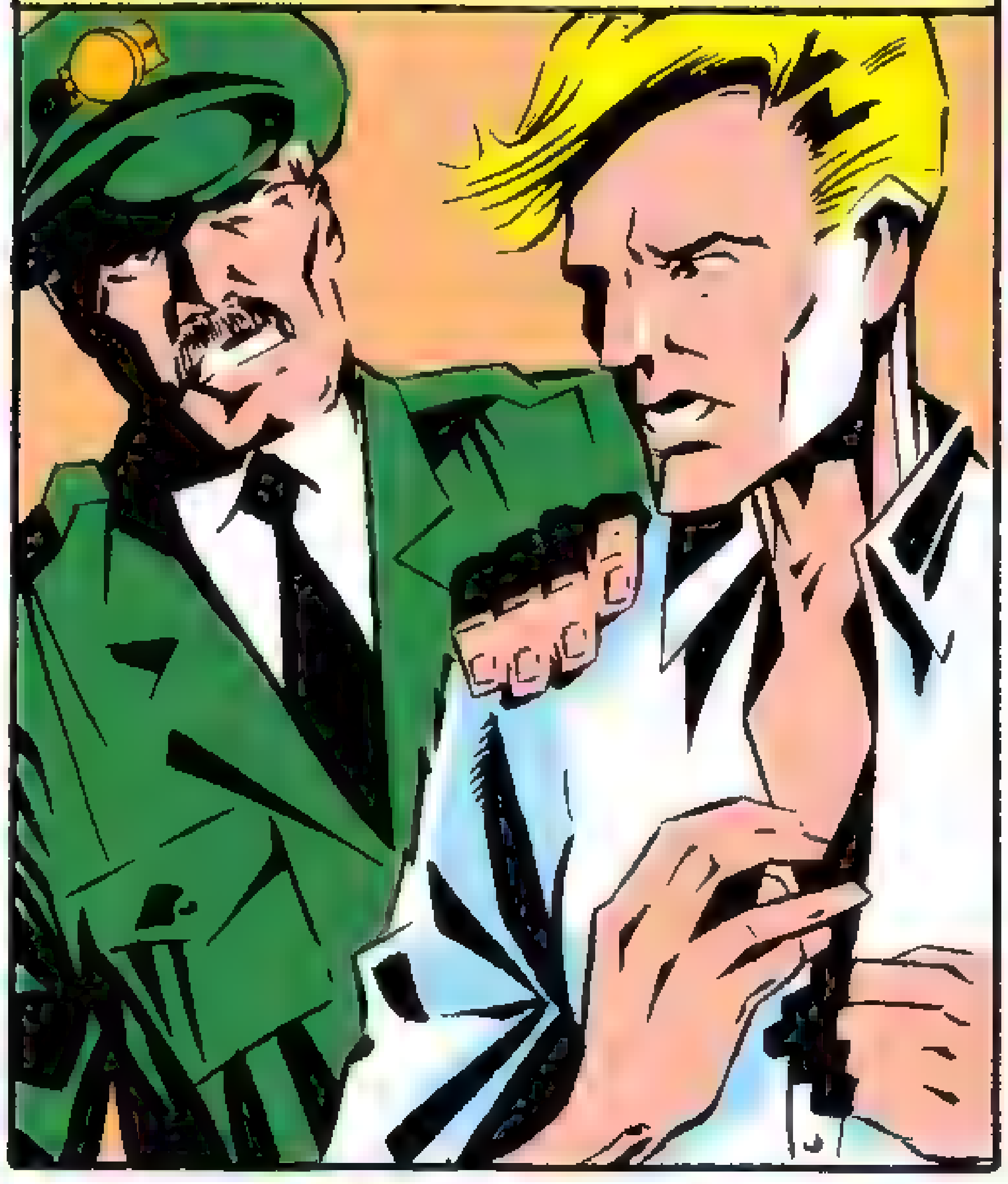
THE NAZIS' ASSAULT ON FREEDOM SPURRED THE NEED IN HIM TO TAKE ACTION. THE NEXT DAY THE YOUNG ART STUDENT WENT TO HIS NEAREST ARMY RECRUITMENT STATION TO SIGN UP.

UNFORTUNATELY, NATURE DID NOT PROVIDE HIM WITH A BODY TO MATCH THE STRENGTH OF HIS IDEALS AND HE WAS REJECTED AS PHYSICALLY UNFIT FOR MILITARY SERVICE.

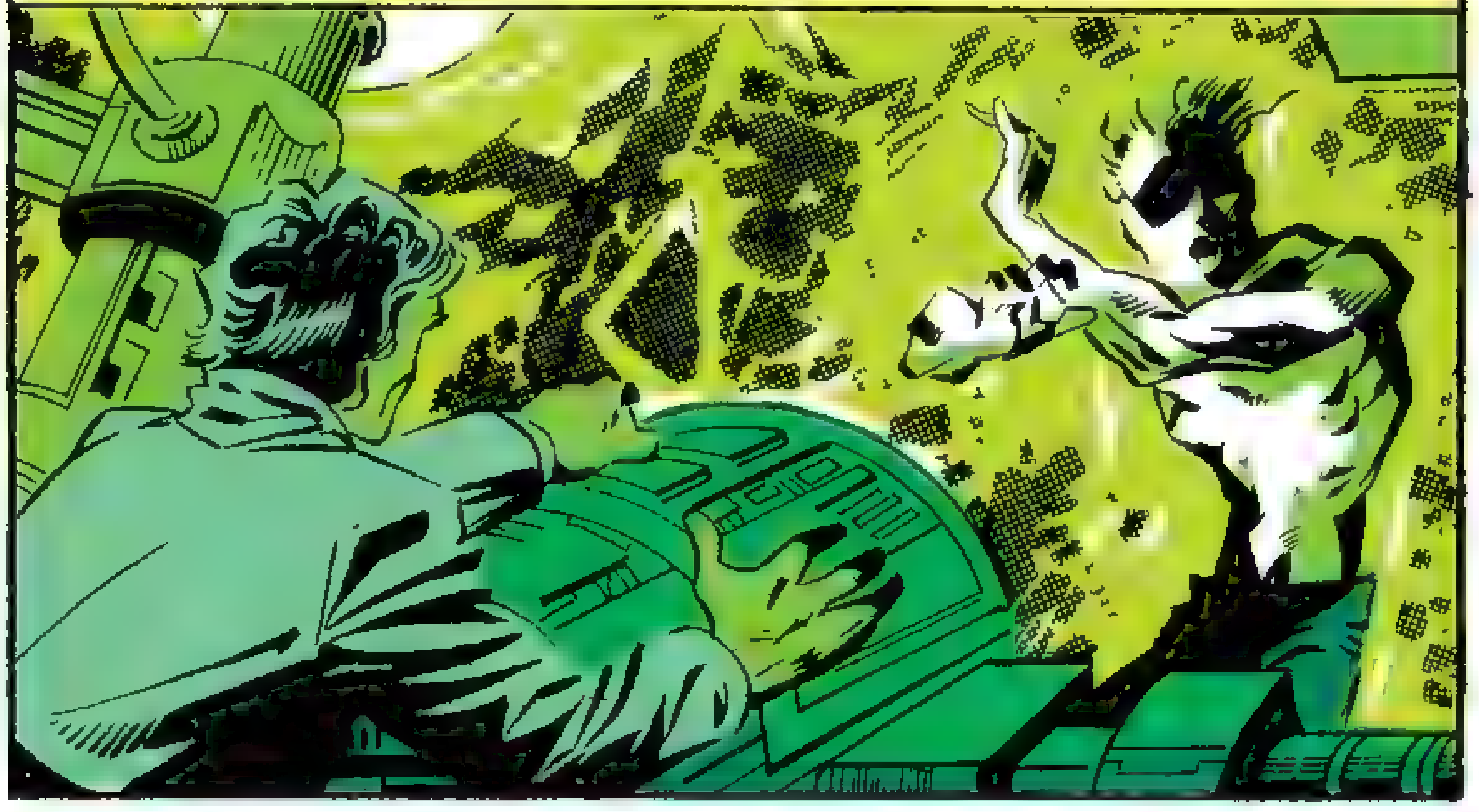


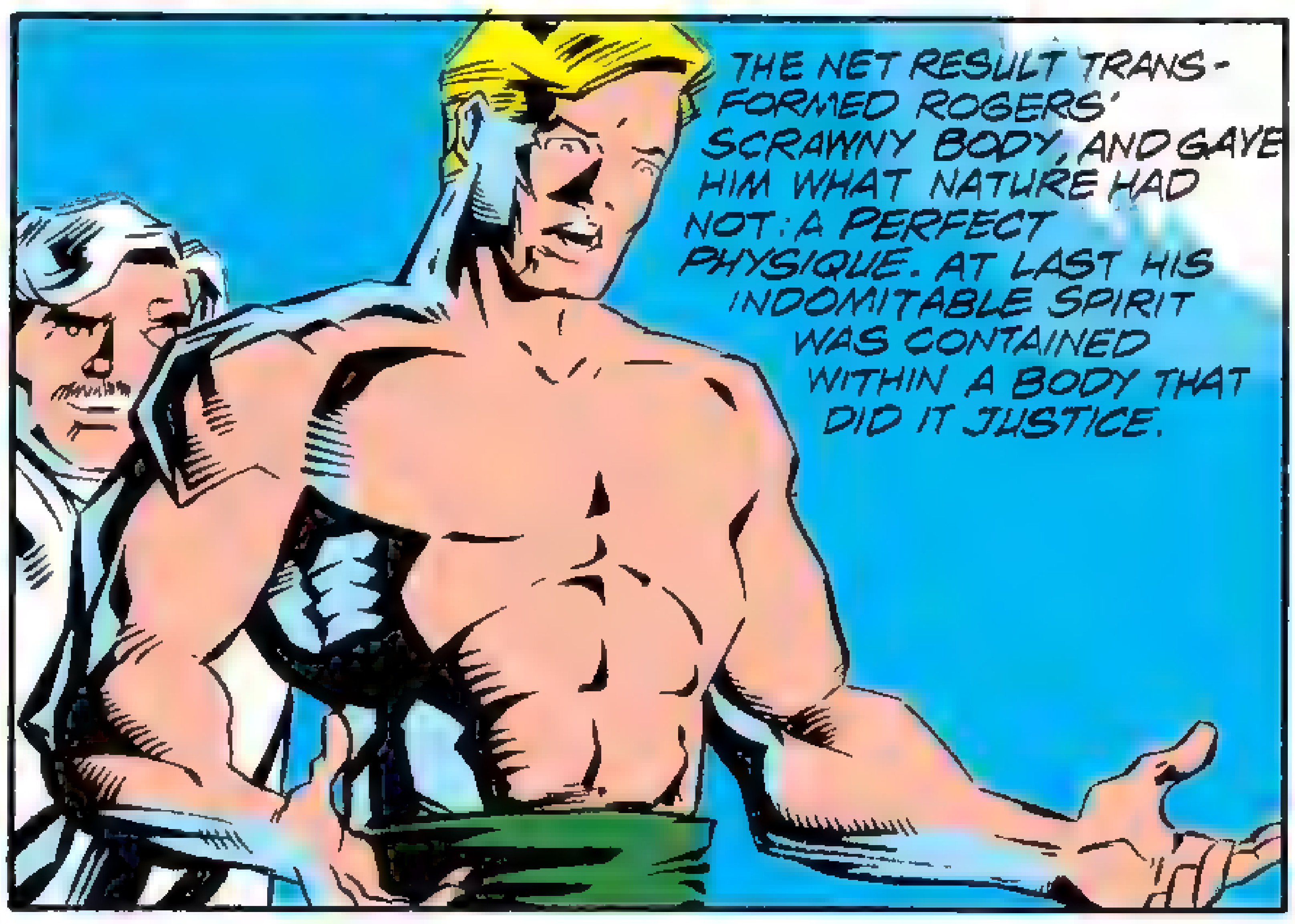
GENERAL PHILLIPS HEARD THE BOY'S IMPASSIONED SPEECH WHY HE SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO SERVE SOME OTHER WAY AND OFFERED HIM THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO JUST THAT.

HE OFFERED HIM THE CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN OPERATION: REBIRTH, A PLAN TO CREATE A PLATOON OF AMERICAN SUPER-SOLDIERS.

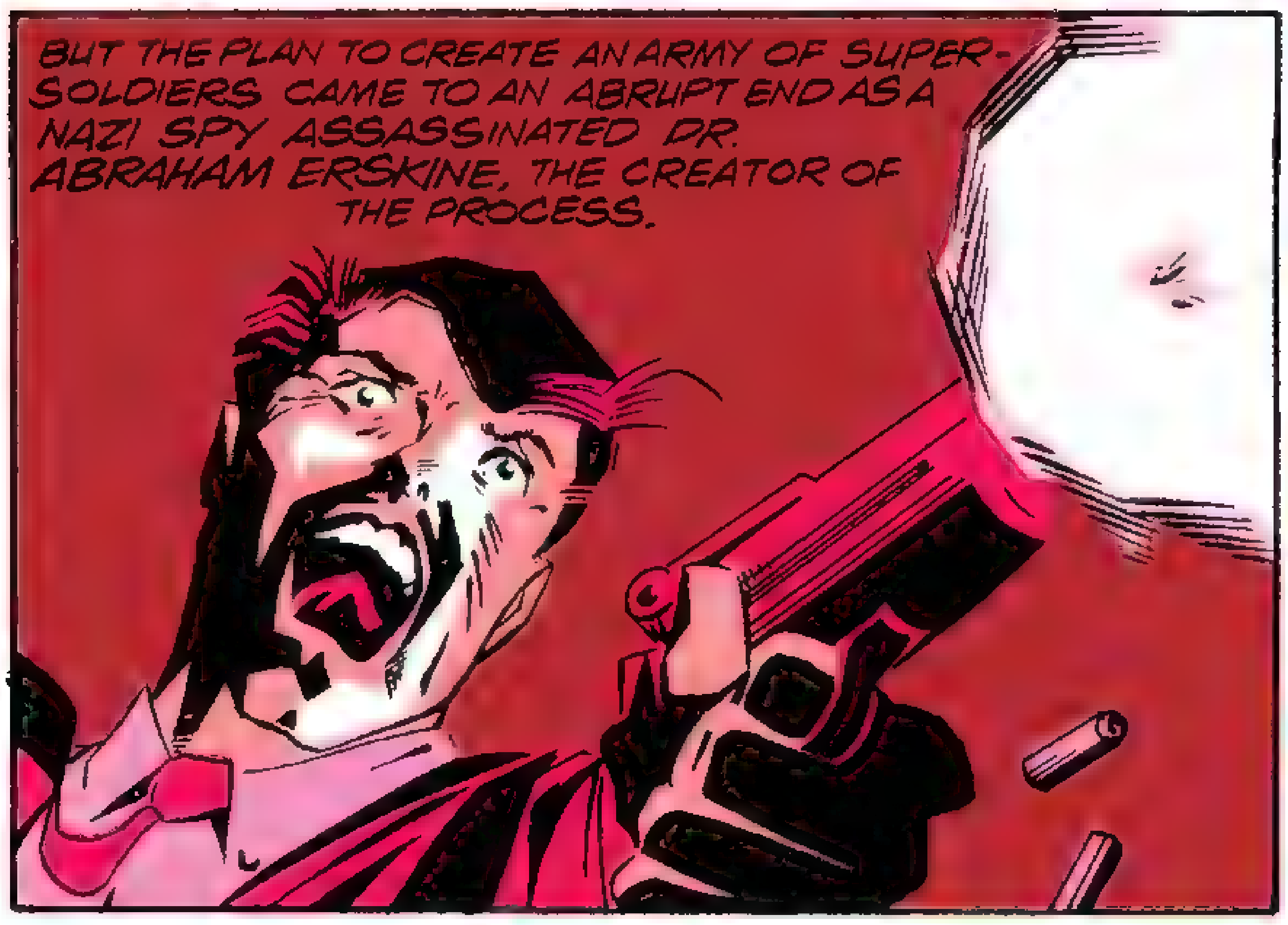


CAREFULLY SCREENED AND CHOSEN AS AN IDEAL SUBJECT FOR THE HIGHLY EXPERIMENTAL PROCESS, ROGERS UNDERWENT A GRUELING BATTERY OF ORAL, INTRAVENOUS, AND RADIATION TREATMENTS.



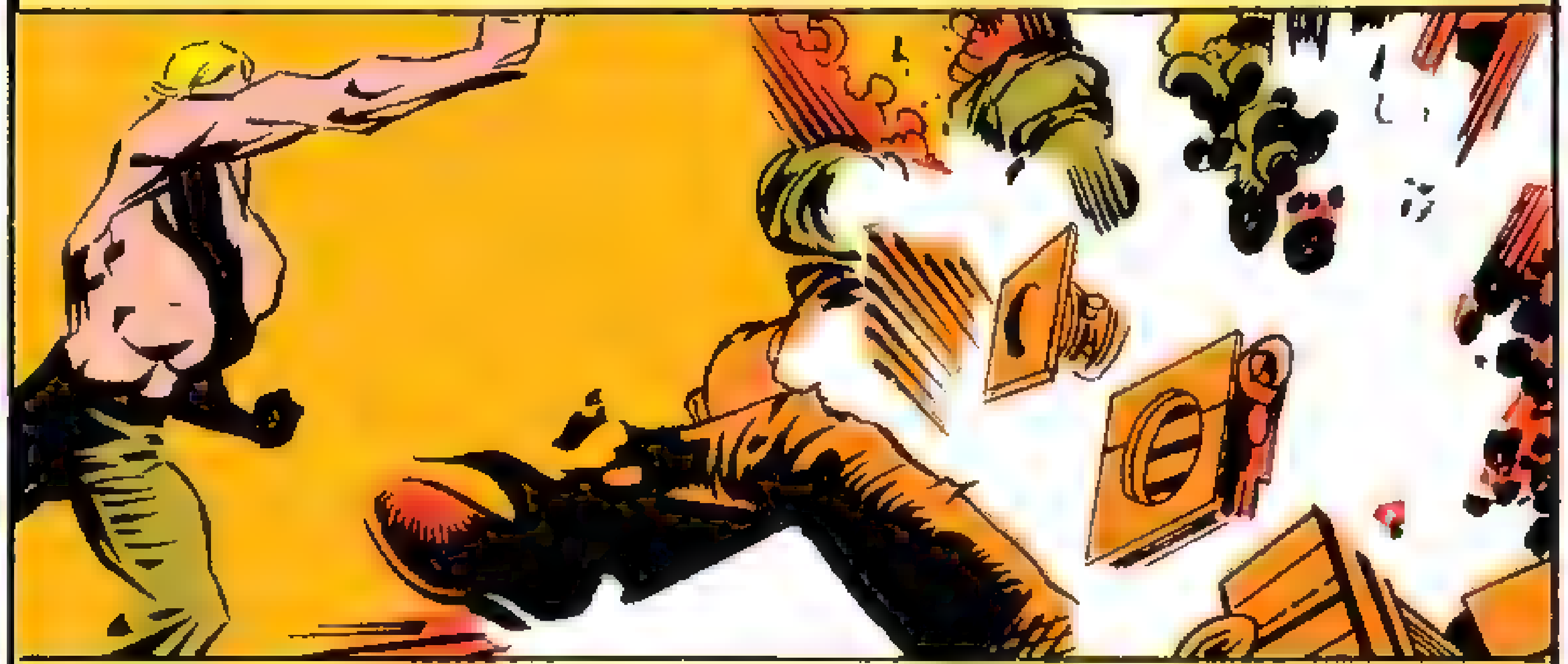


THE NET RESULT TRANSFORMED ROGERS' SCRAWNY BODY, AND GAVE HIM WHAT NATURE HAD NOT: A PERFECT PHYSIQUE. AT LAST HIS INDOMITABLE SPIRIT WAS CONTAINED WITHIN A BODY THAT DID IT JUSTICE.

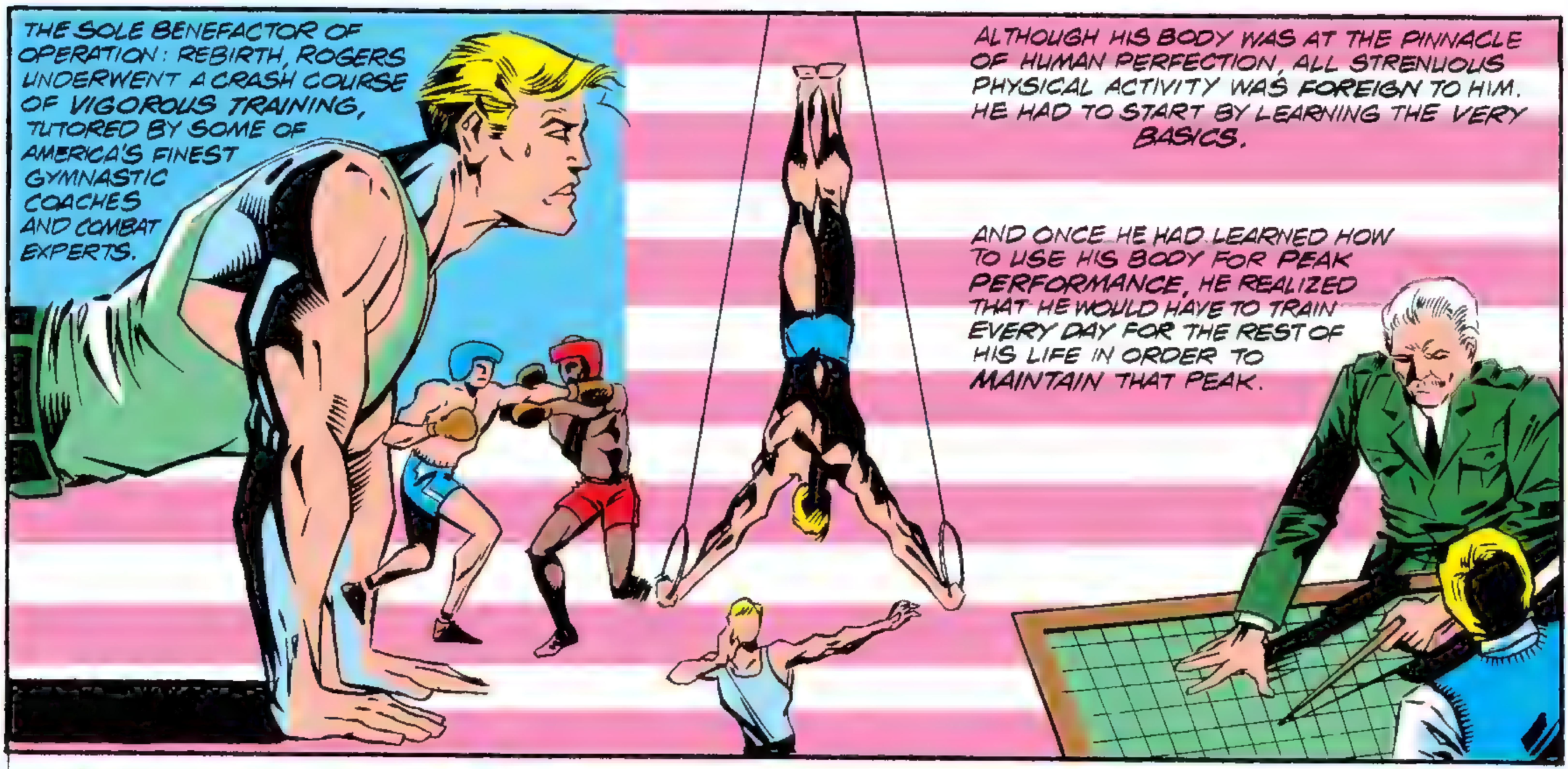


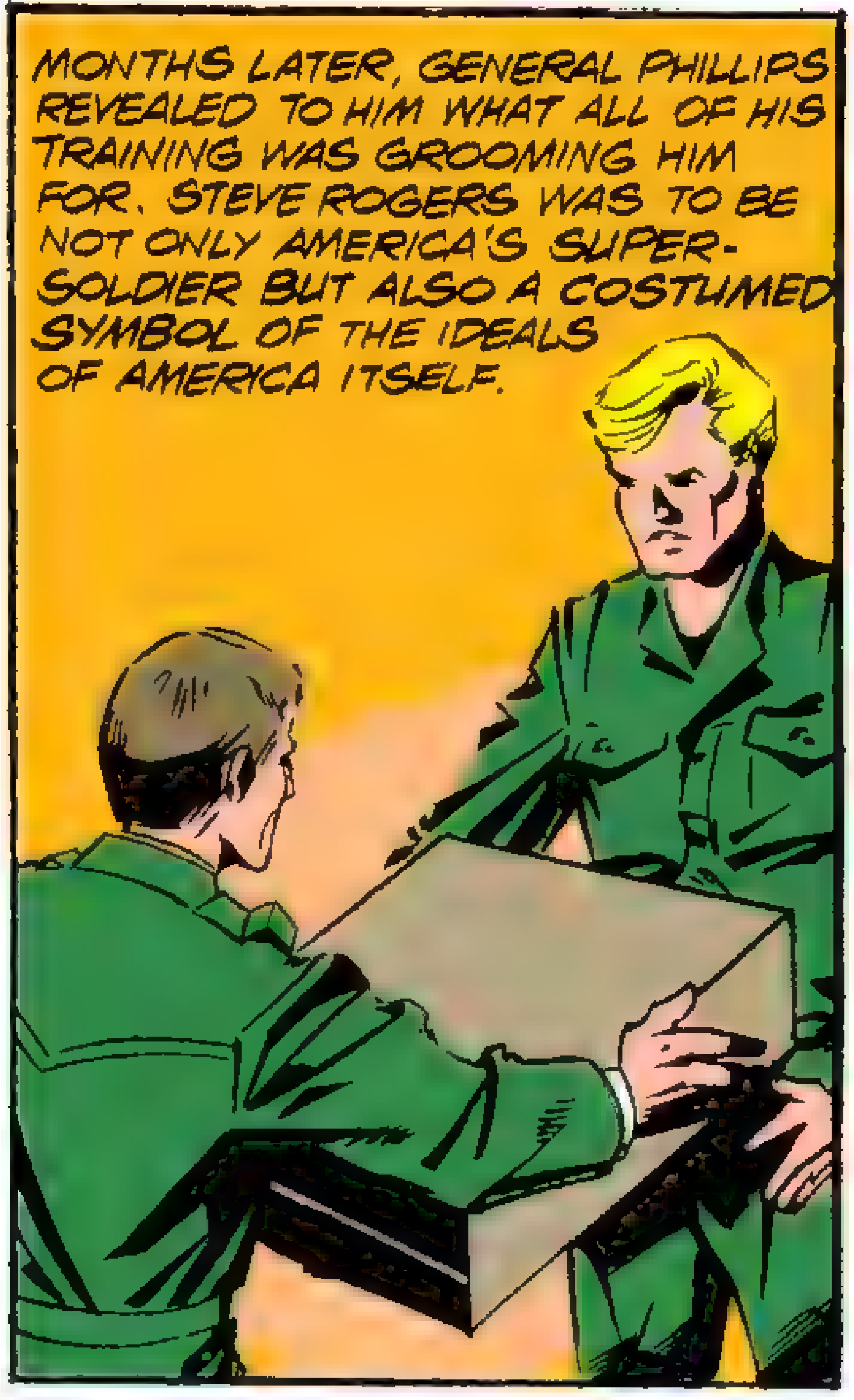
BUT THE PLAN TO CREATE AN ARMY OF SUPER-SOLDIERS CAME TO AN ABRUPT END AS A NAZI SPY ASSASSINATED DR. ABRAHAM ERSKINE, THE CREATOR OF THE PROCESS.

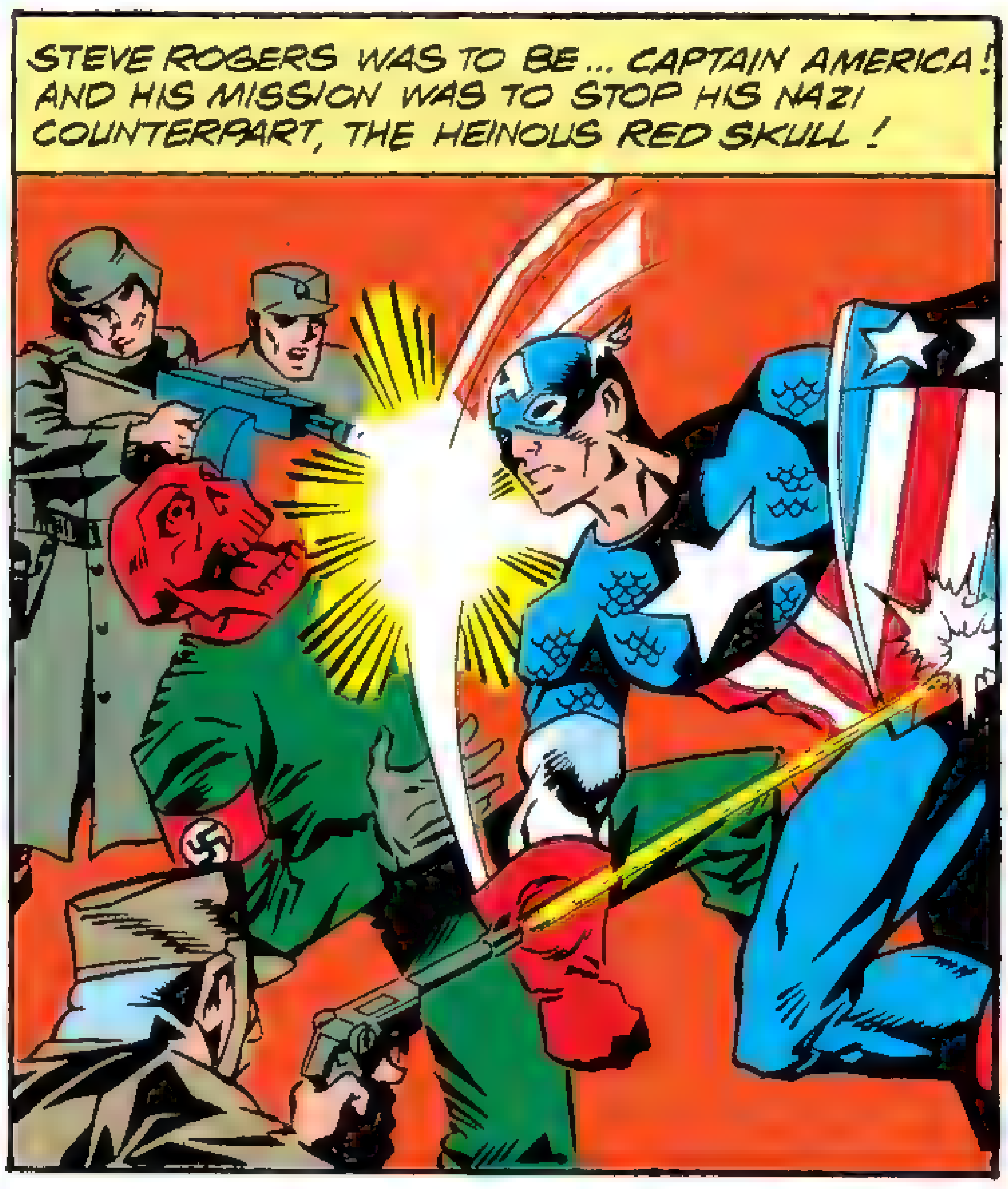
BEFORE THE SPY COULD TURN HIS PISTOL ON ANOTHER INNOCENT, ROGERS REACTED, AND THOUGH HE HAD NEVER BEFORE THROWN A PUNCH BEFORE IN HIS LIFE, HE *STRUCK* THE ASSASSIN, SENDING HIM SAILING INTO THE *POWER GENERATOR*.

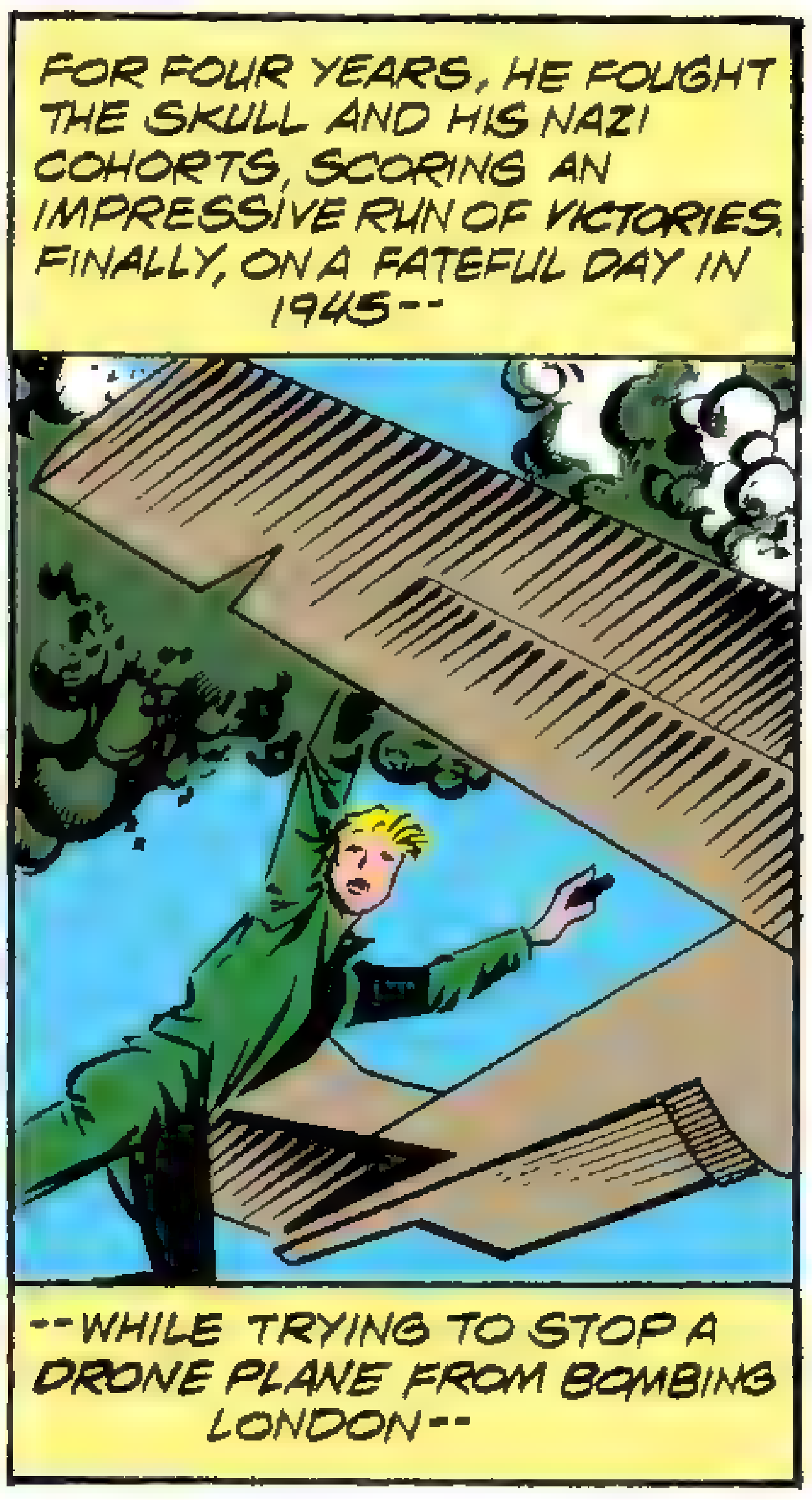


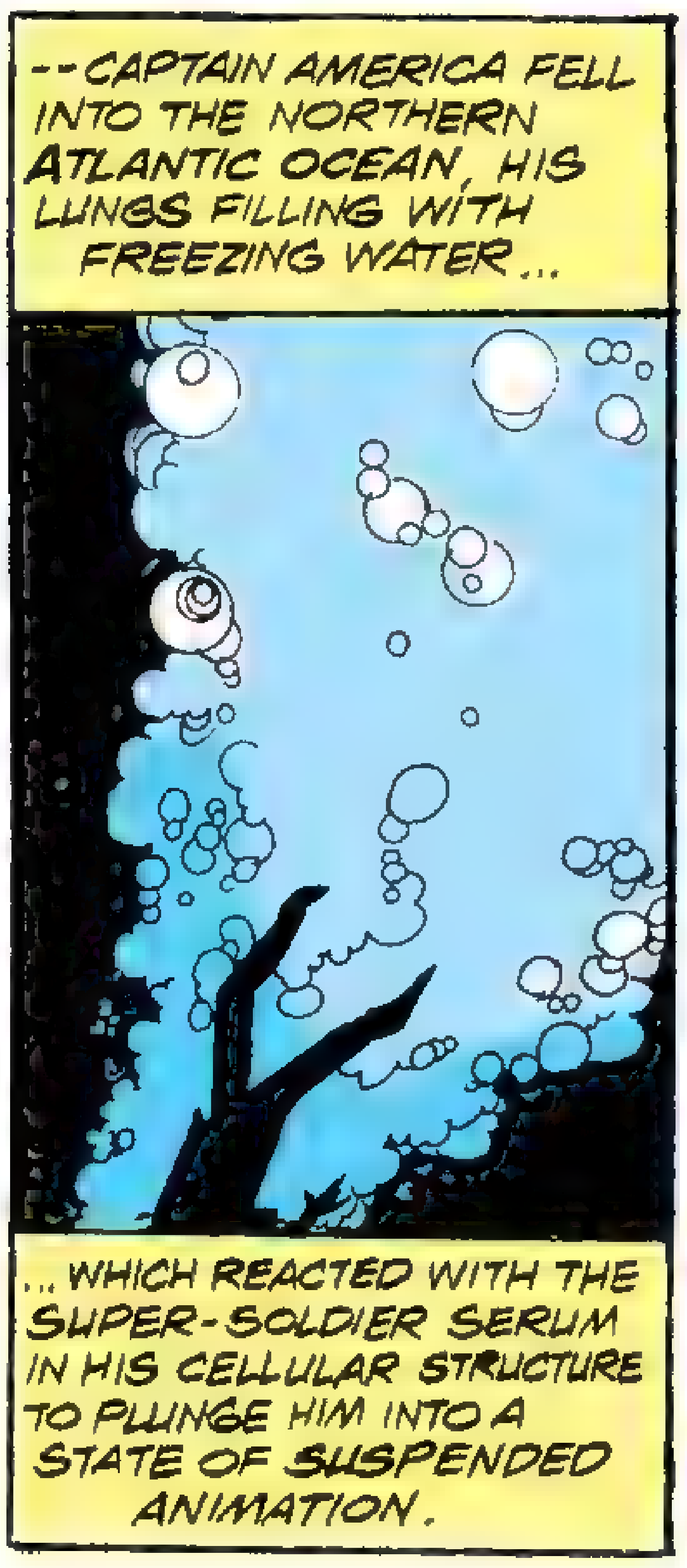
WHILE TRYING TO EXTRICATE HIMSELF, THE SPY GRABBED THE WRONG WIRES AND *DIED*.

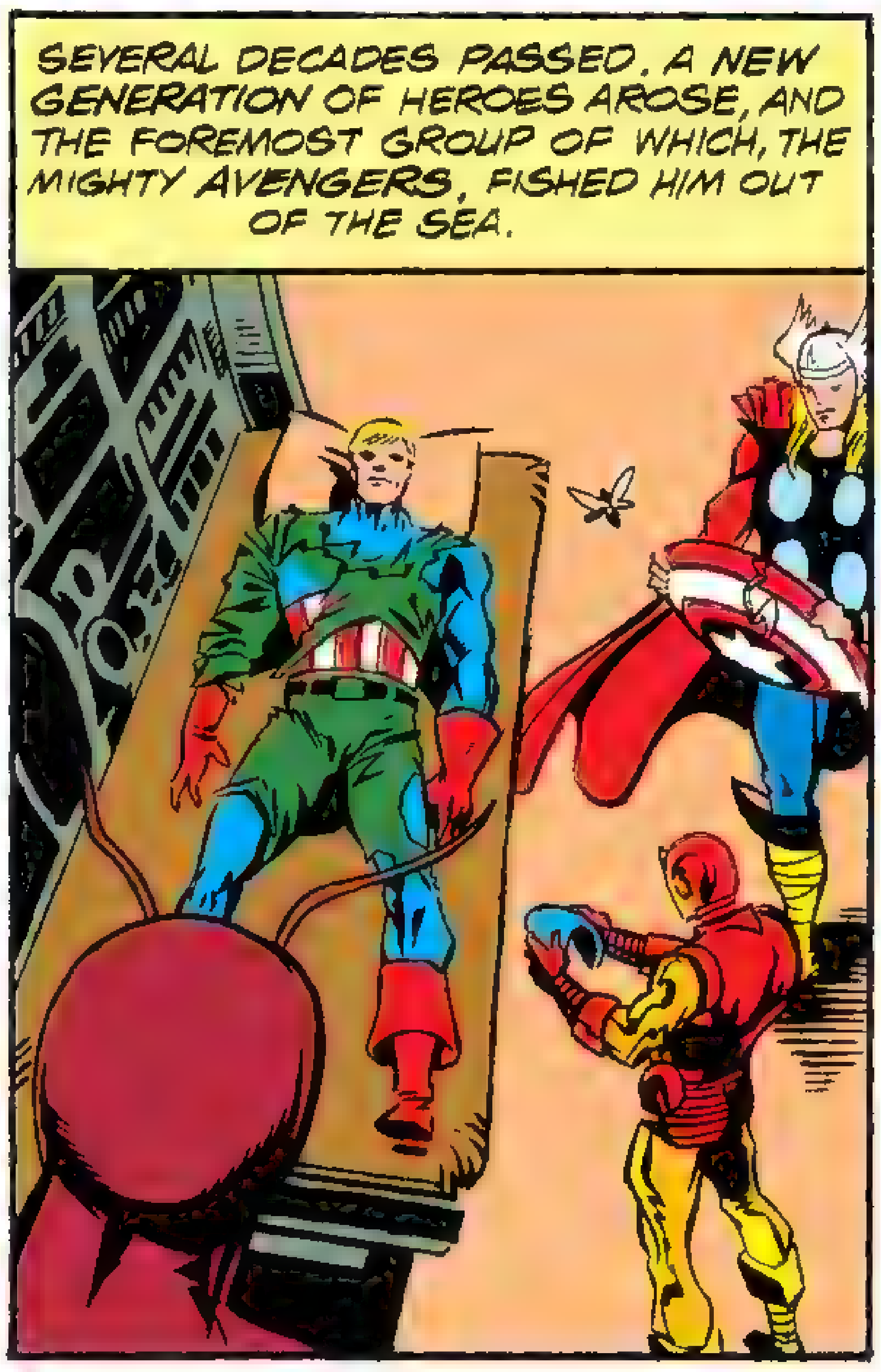

THE SOLE BENEFACTOR OF OPERATION: REBIRTH, ROGERS UNDERWENT A CRASH COURSE OF VIGOROUS TRAINING, TUTORED BY SOME OF AMERICA'S FINEST GYMNASTIC COACHES AND COMBAT EXPERTS.
ALTHOUGH HIS BODY WAS AT THE PINNACLE OF HUMAN PERFECTION, ALL STRENUOUS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY WAS FOREIGN TO HIM. HE HAD TO START BY LEARNING THE VERY BASICS.
AND ONCE HE HAD LEARNED HOW TO USE HIS BODY FOR PEAK PERFORMANCE, HE REALIZED THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO TRAIN EVERY DAY FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THAT PEAK.

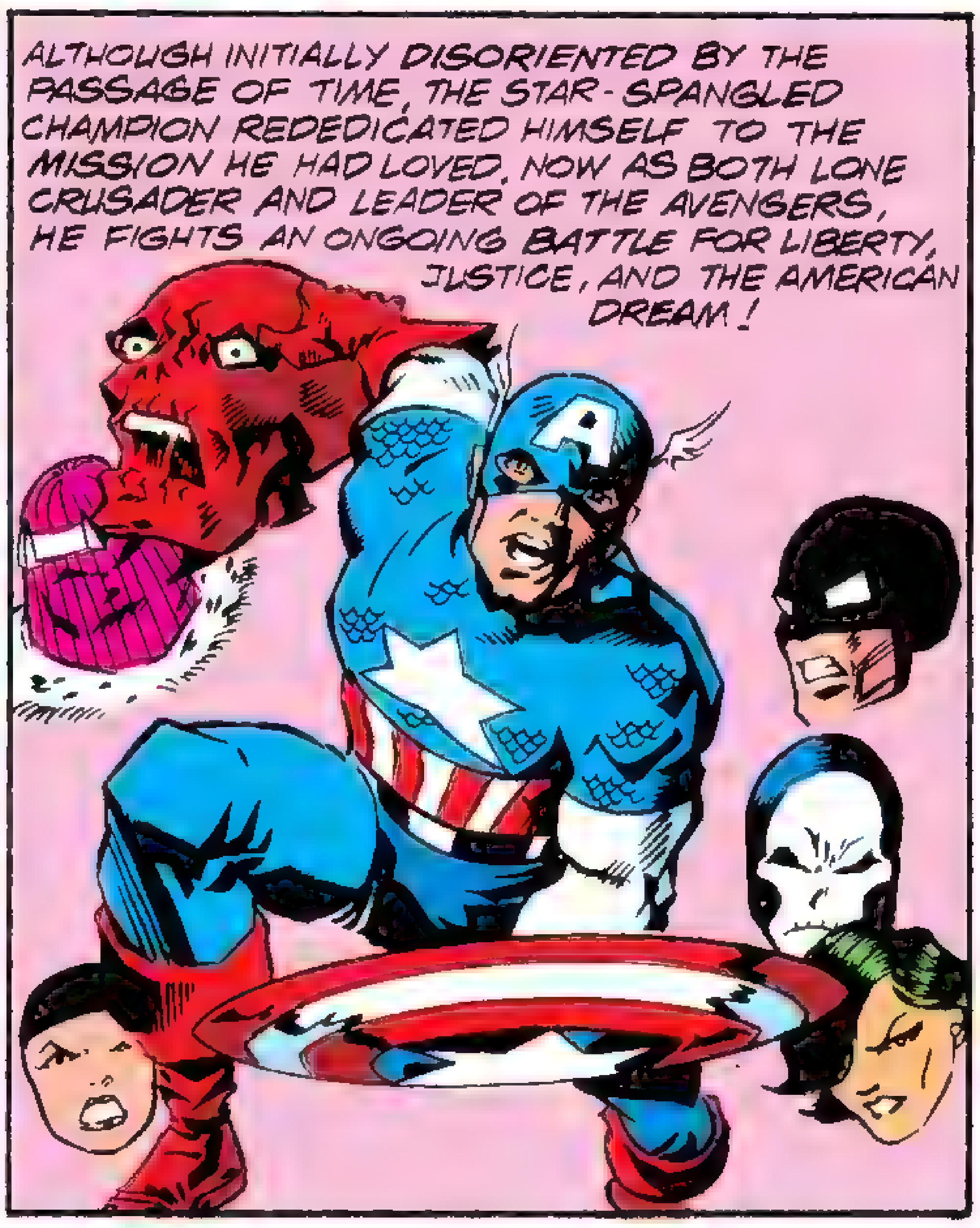

MONTHS LATER, GENERAL PHILLIPS REVEALED TO HIM WHAT ALL OF HIS TRAINING WAS GROOMING HIM FOR. STEVE ROGERS WAS TO BE NOT ONLY AMERICA'S SUPER-SOLDIER BUT ALSO A COSTUMED SYMBOL OF THE IDEALS OF AMERICA ITSELF.

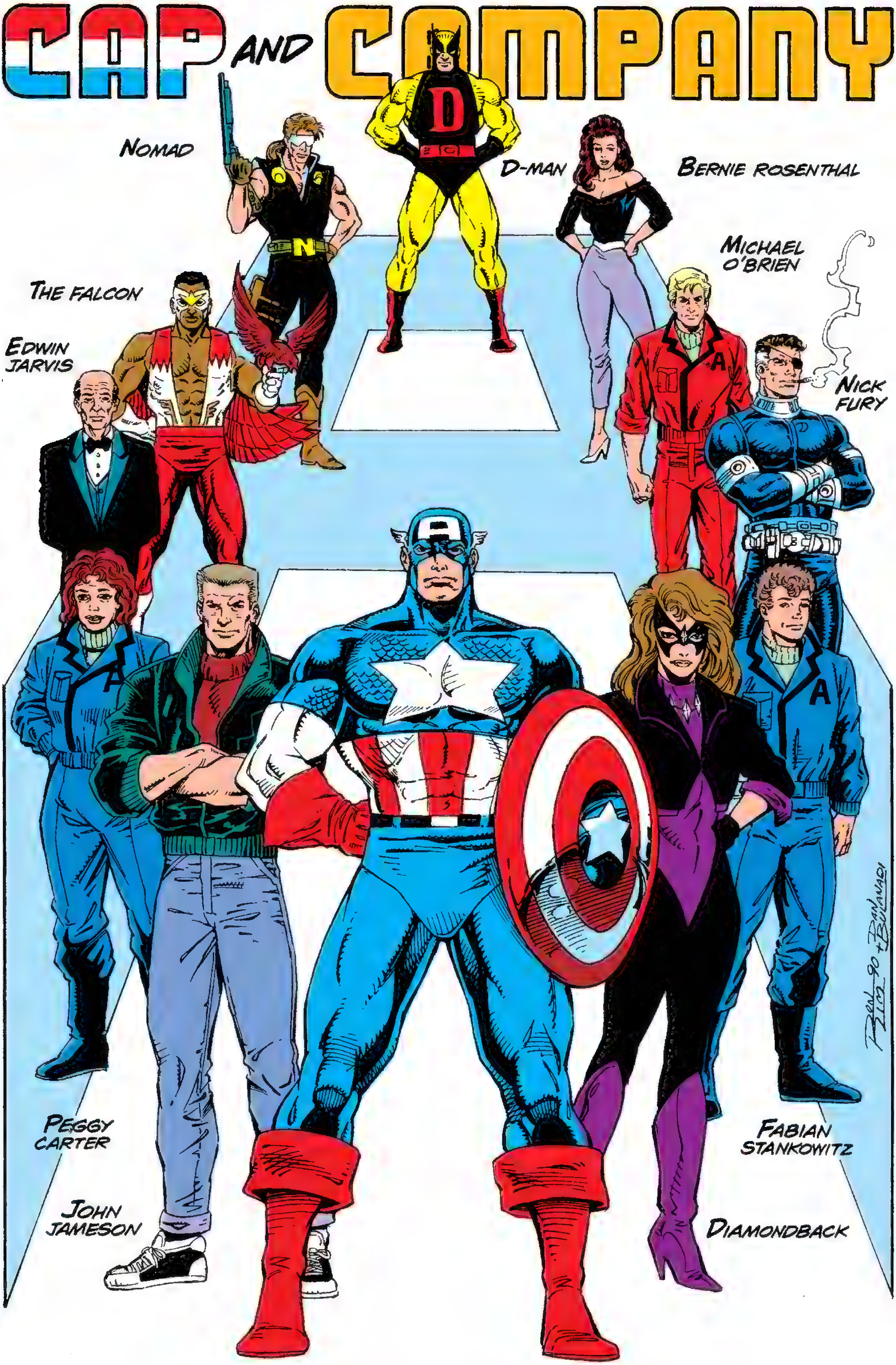

STEVE ROGERS WAS TO BE... CAPTAIN AMERICA! AND HIS MISSION WAS TO STOP HIS NAZI COUNTERPART, THE HEINOUS RED SKULL!

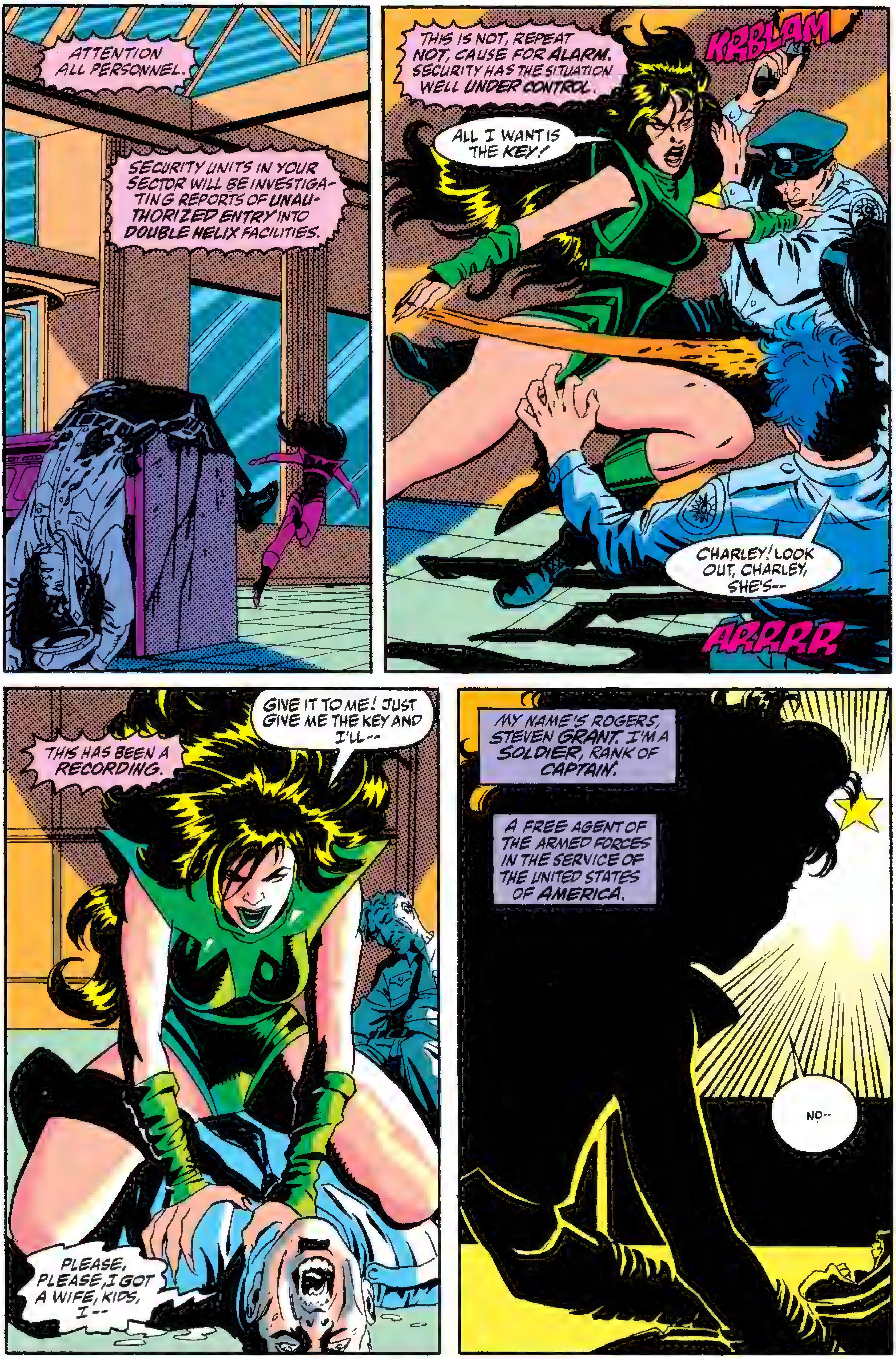

FOR FOUR YEARS, HE FOUGHT THE SKULL AND HIS NAZI COHORTS, SCORING AN IMPRESSIVE RUN OF VICTORIES. FINALLY, ON A FATEFUL DAY IN 1945--
--WHILE TRYING TO STOP A DRONE PLANE FROM BOMBING LONDON--

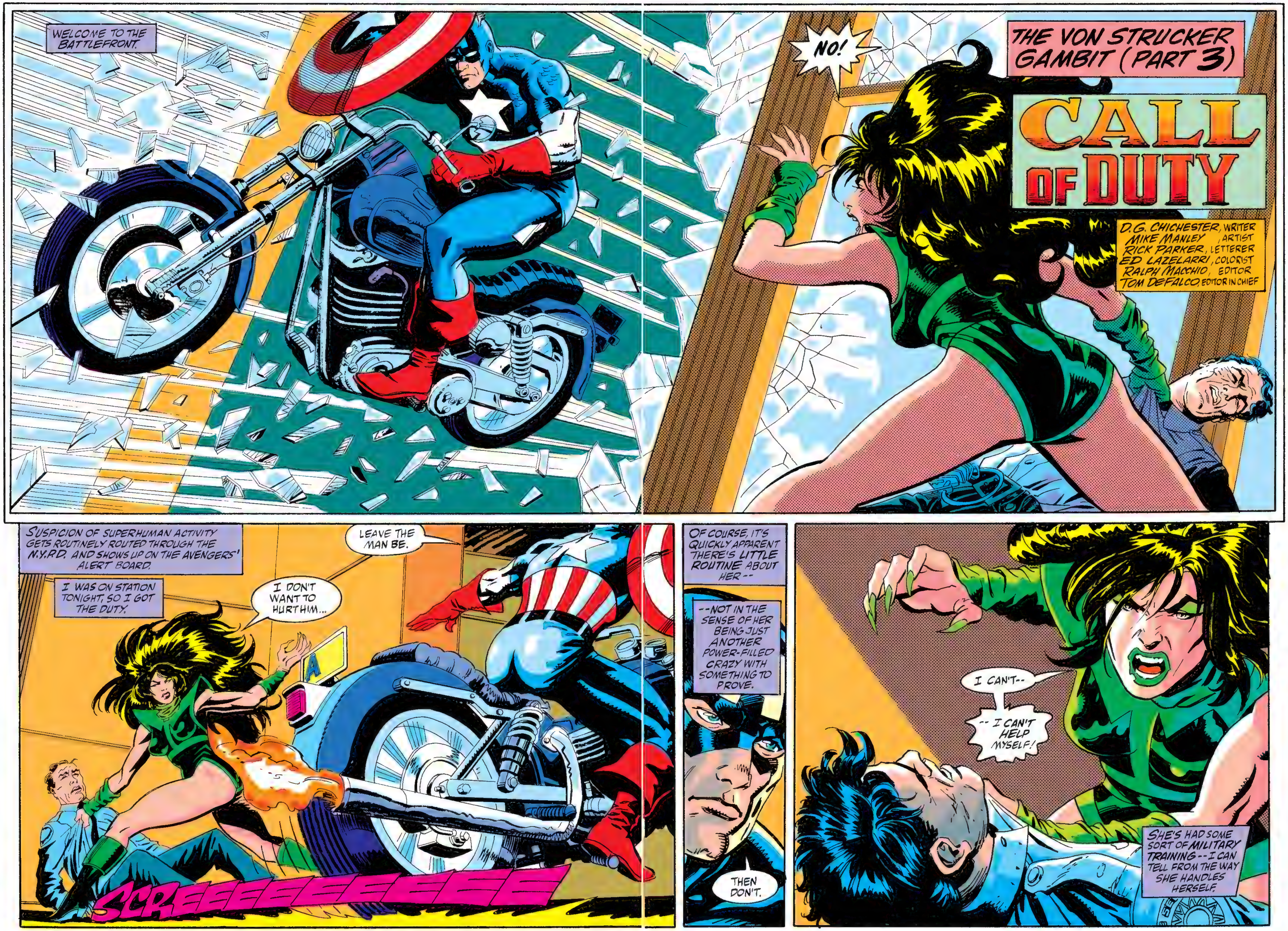

--CAPTAIN AMERICA FELL INTO THE NORTHERN ATLANTIC OCEAN, HIS LUNGS FILLING WITH FREEZING WATER...
...WHICH REACTED WITH THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM IN HIS CELLULAR STRUCTURE TO PLUNGE HIM INTO A STATE OF SUSPENDED ANIMATION.

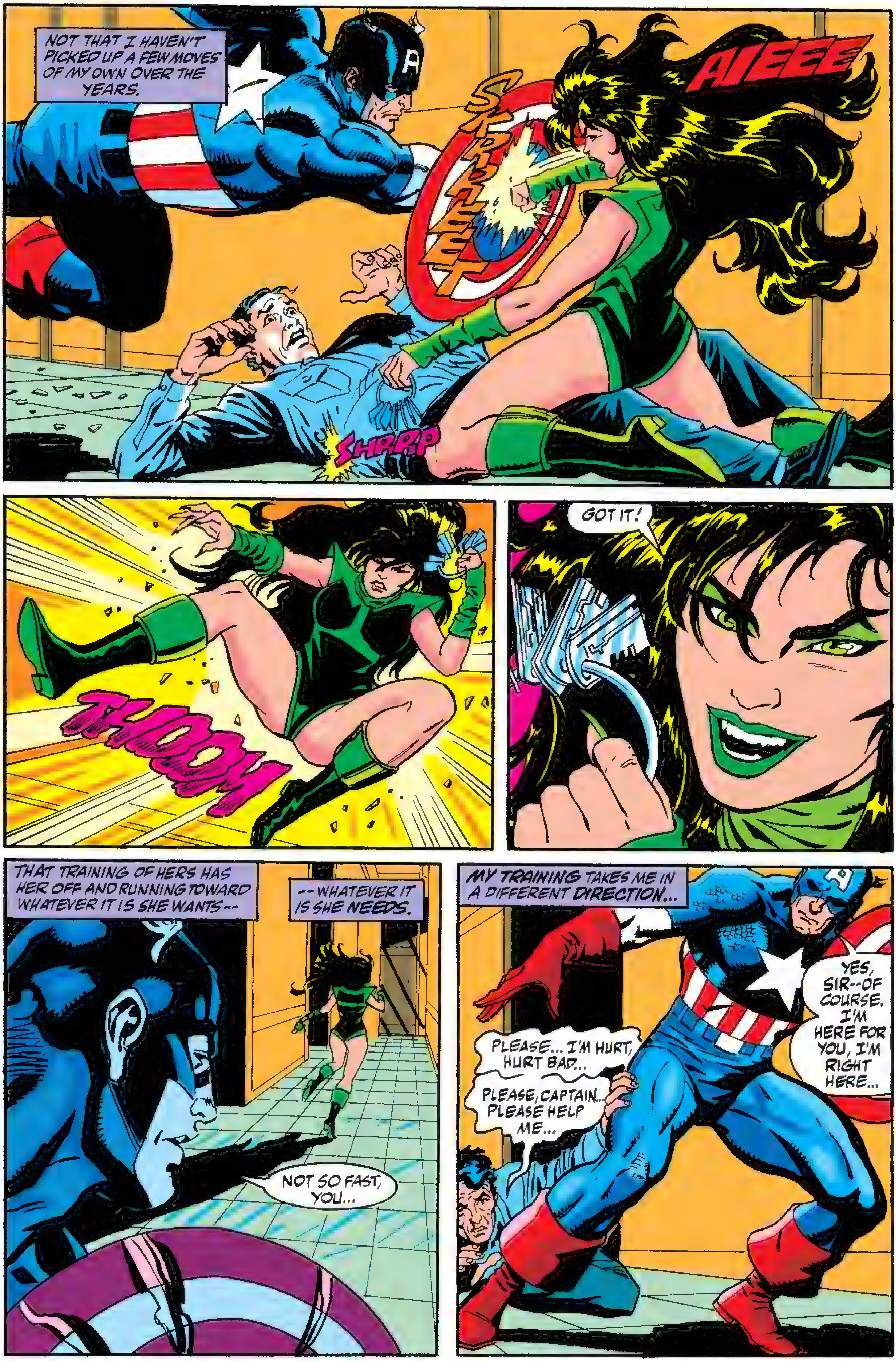

SEVERAL DECADES PASSED. A NEW GENERATION OF HEROES AROSE, AND THE FOREMOST GROUP OF WHICH, THE MIGHTY AVENGERS, FISHED HIM OUT OF THE SEA.

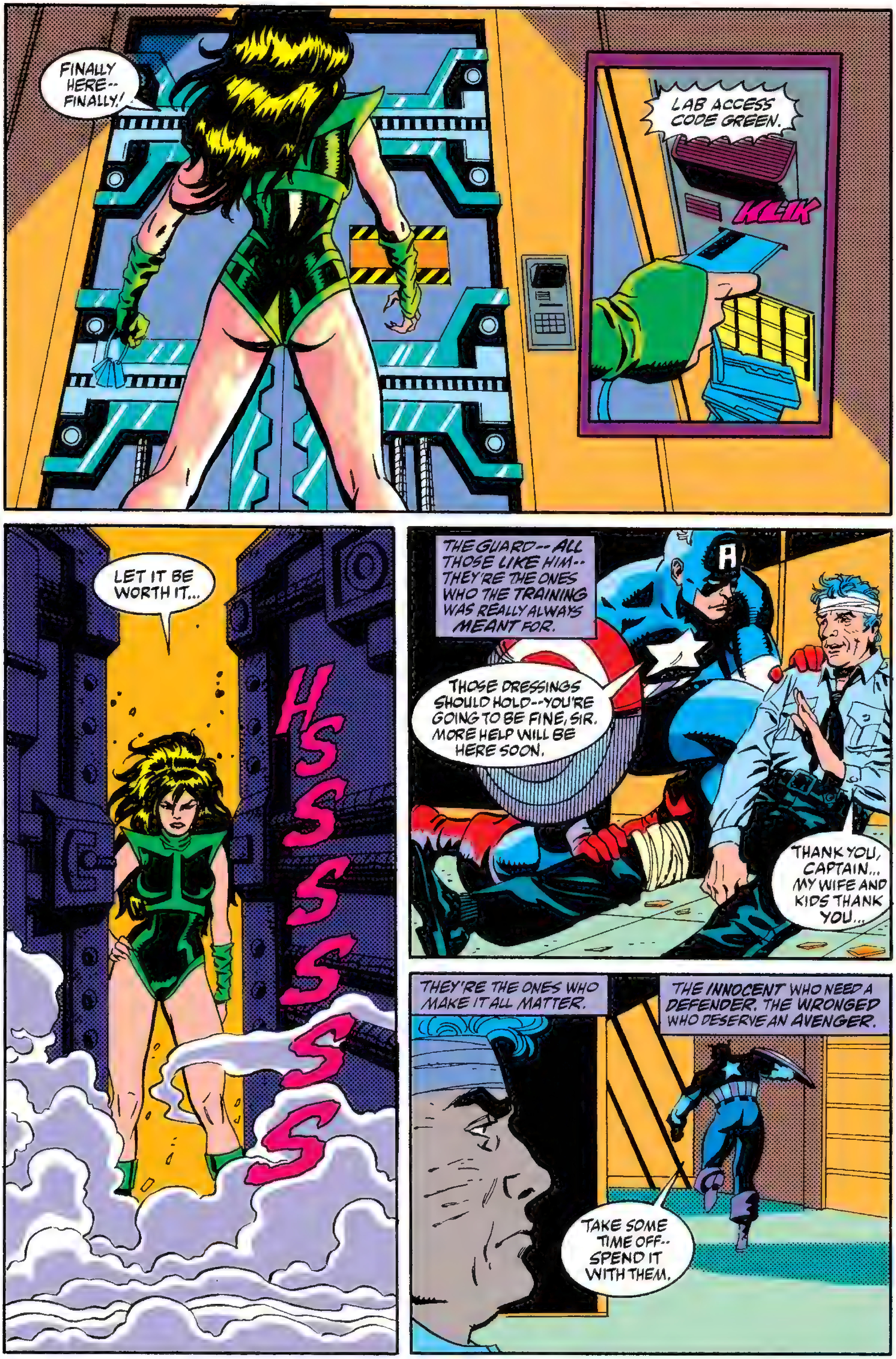

ALTHOUGH INITIALLY DISORIENTED BY THE PASSAGE OF TIME, THE STAR-SPANGLED CHAMPION REDEDICATED HIMSELF TO THE MISSION HE HAD LOVED, NOW AS BOTH LONE CRUSADER AND LEADER OF THE AVENGERS, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE FOR LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM!

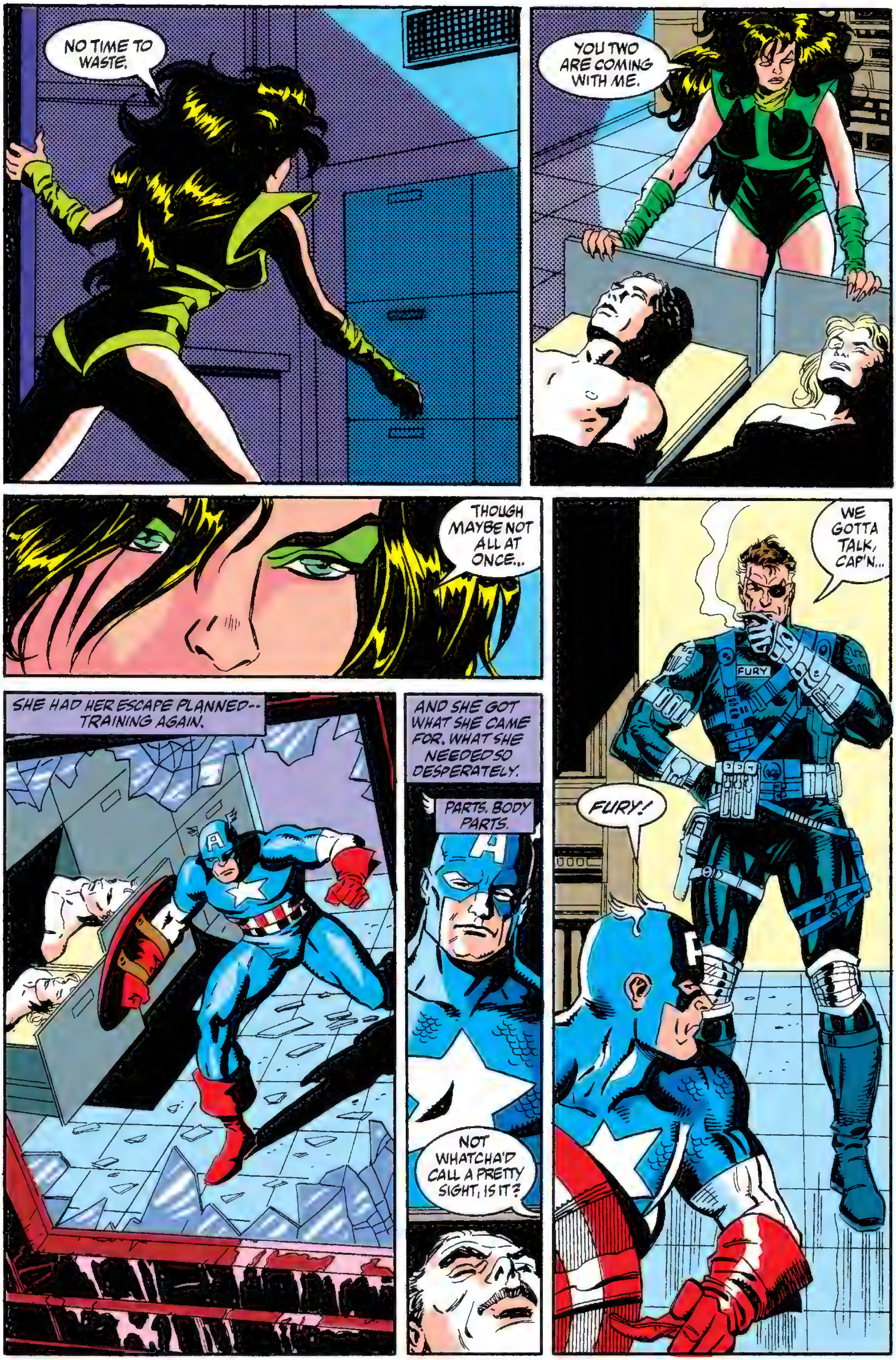

CAP AND COMPANY
NOMAD
D-MAN
BERNIE ROSENTHAL
MICHAEL O'BRIEN
THE FALCON
EDWIN JARVIS
NICK FURY
PEGGY CARTER
FABIAN STANKOWITZ
JOHN JAMESON
DIAMONDBACK
RON LIM 90 + DAN BULANADI


ATTENTION ALL PERSONNEL.
SECURITY UNITS IN YOUR SECTOR WILL BE INVESTIGATING REPORTS OF UNAUTHORIZED ENTRY INTO DOUBLE HELIX FACILITIES.
THIS IS NOT, REPEAT NOT, CAUSE FOR ALARM. SECURITY HAS THE SITUATION WELL UNDER CONTROL.
KRBLAM
ALL I WANT IS THE KEY!
CHARLEY! LOOK OUT, CHARLEY, SHE'S--
ARRRR
THIS HAS BEEN A RECORDING.
GIVE IT TO ME! JUST GIVE ME THE KEY AND I'LL--
PLEASE, PLEASE, I GOT A WIFE, KIDS, I--
MY NAME'S ROGERS, STEVEN GRANT. I'M A SOLDIER, RANK OF CAPTAIN.
A FREE AGENT OF THE ARMED FORCES IN THE SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
NO--

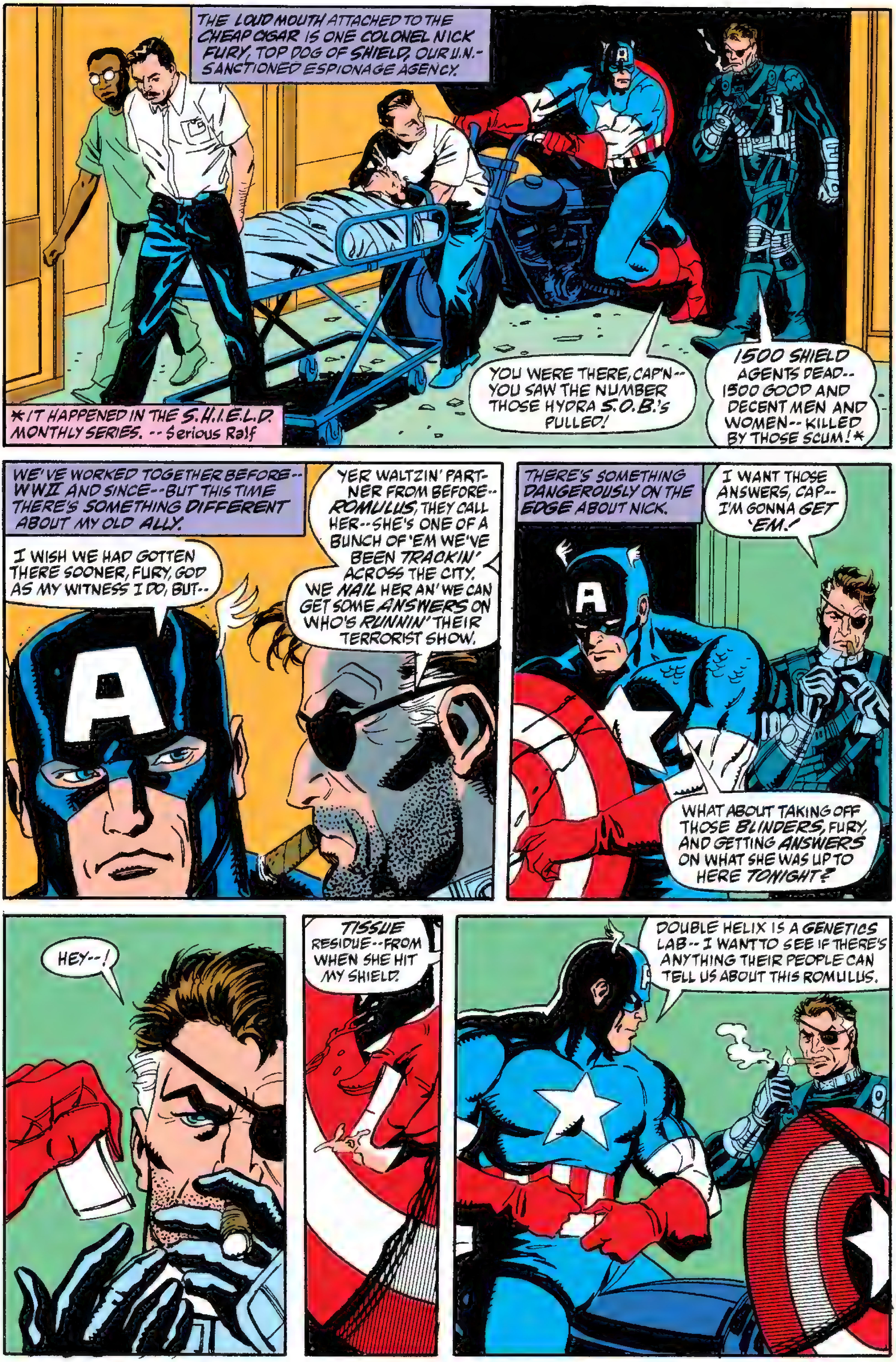

WELCOME TO THE BATTLEFRONT.
NO!
THE VON STRUCKER GAMBIT (PART 3)
CALL OF DUTY
D.G. CHICHESTER, WRITER
MIKE MANLEY, ARTIST
RICK PARKER, LETTERER
ED LAZELARRI, COLORIST
RALPH MACCHIO, EDITOR
TOM DEFALCO, EDITOR IN CHIEF
SUSPICION OF SUPERHUMAN ACTIVITY GETS ROUTINELY ROUTED THROUGH THE N.Y.P.D. AND SHOWS UP ON THE AVENGERS' ALERT BOARD.
I WAS ON STATION TONIGHT, SO I GOT THE DUTY.
LEAVE THE MAN BE.
I DON'T WANT TO HURT HIM...
A
SCREEEEEEEEEEE
OF COURSE, IT'S QUICKLY APPARENT THERE'S LITTLE ROUTINE ABOUT HER--
--NOT IN THE SENSE OF HER BEING JUST ANOTHER POWER-FILLED CRAZY WITH SOMETHING TO PROVE.
THEN DON'T.
I CAN'T--
--I CAN'T HELP MYSELF!
SHE'S HAD SOME SORT OF MILITARY TRAINING--I CAN TELL FROM THE WAY SHE HANDLES HERSELF.

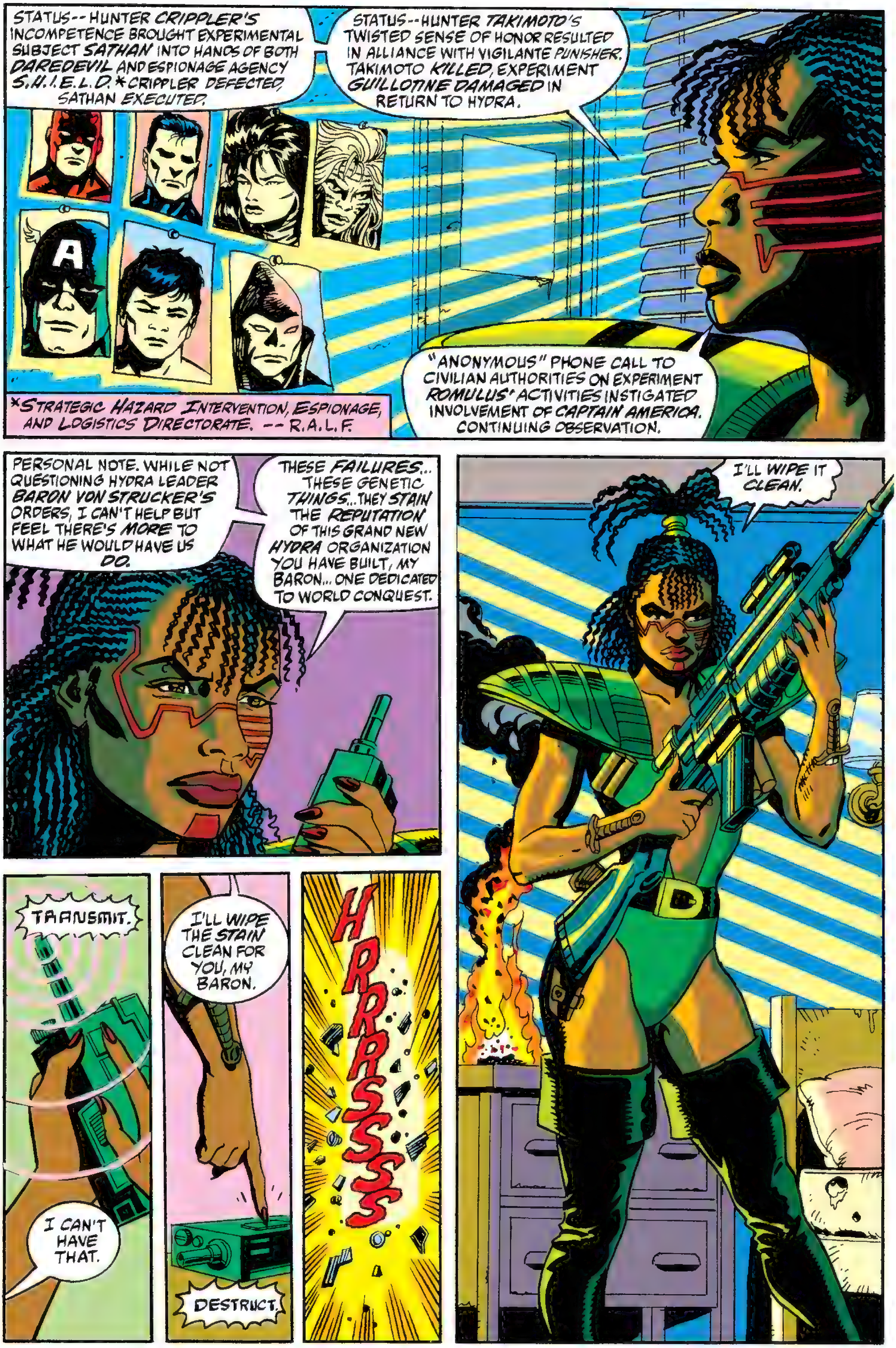

NOT THAT I HAVEN'T PICKED UP A FEW MOVES OF MY OWN OVER THE YEARS.
SKRREEEE
AIEEE
SHRRP
THOOM
GOT IT!
THAT TRAINING OF HERS HAS HER OFF AND RUNNING TOWARD WHATEVER IT IS SHE WANTS--
--WHATEVER IT IS SHE NEEDS.
NOT SO FAST, YOU...
MY TRAINING TAKES ME IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION...
PLEASE... I'M HURT, HURT BAD...
PLEASE, CAPTAIN... PLEASE HELP ME...
YES, SIR--OF COURSE. I'M HERE FOR YOU, I'M RIGHT HERE...

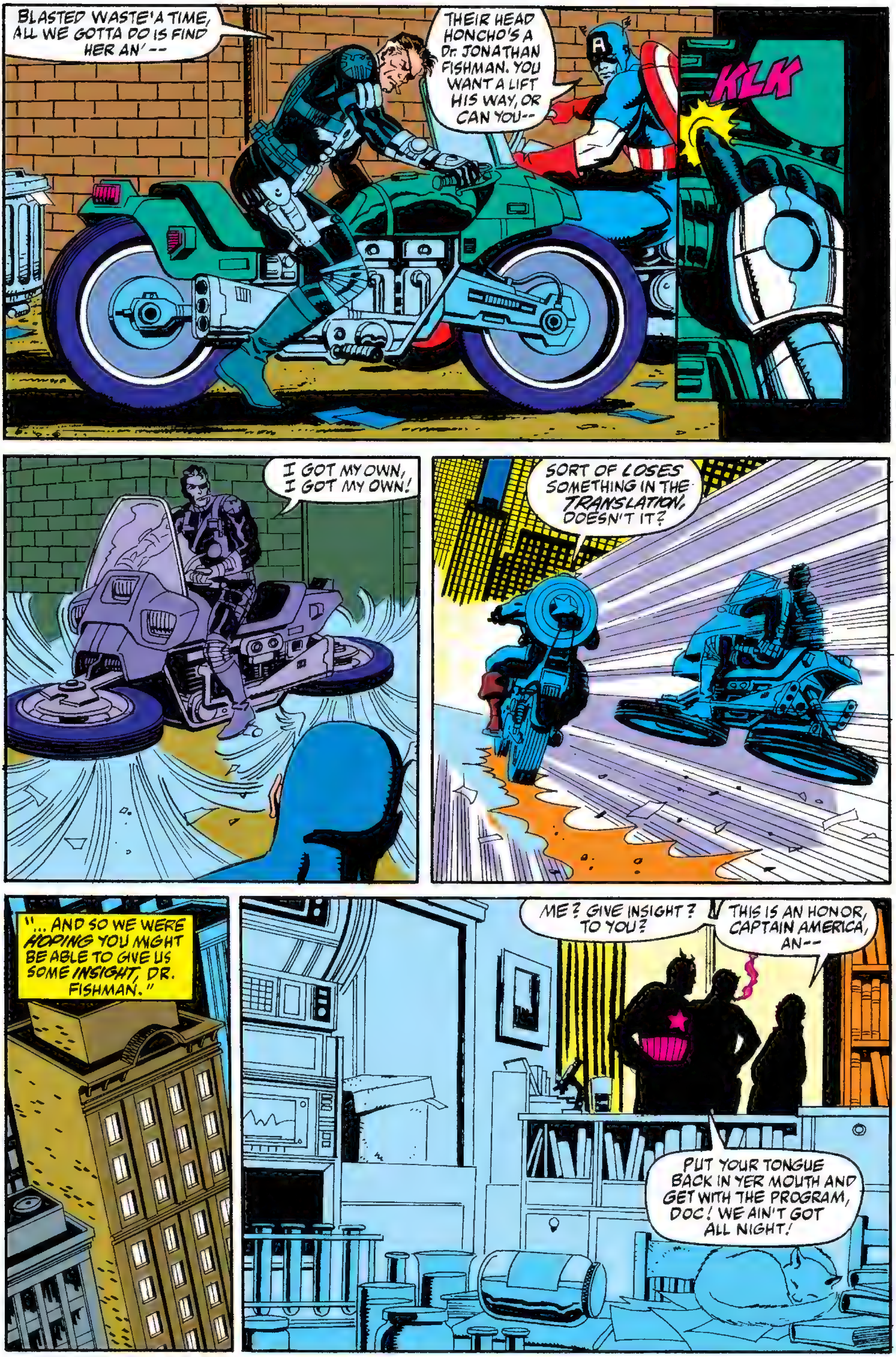

FINALLY HERE-- FINALLY!
LAB ACCESS CODE GREEN.
KLIK
LET IT BE WORTH IT...
HSSSSS
THE GUARD--ALL THOSE LIKE HIM-- THEY'RE THE ONES WHO THE TRAINING WAS REALLY ALWAYS MEANT FOR.
THOSE DRESSINGS SHOULD HOLD--YOU'RE GOING TO BE FINE, SIR. MORE HELP WILL BE HERE SOON.
THANK YOU, CAPTAIN... MY WIFE AND KIDS THANK YOU...
THEY'RE THE ONES WHO MAKE IT ALL MATTER.
THE INNOCENT WHO NEED A DEFENDER. THE WRONGED WHO DESERVE AN AVENGER.
TAKE SOME TIME OFF-- SPEND IT WITH THEM.

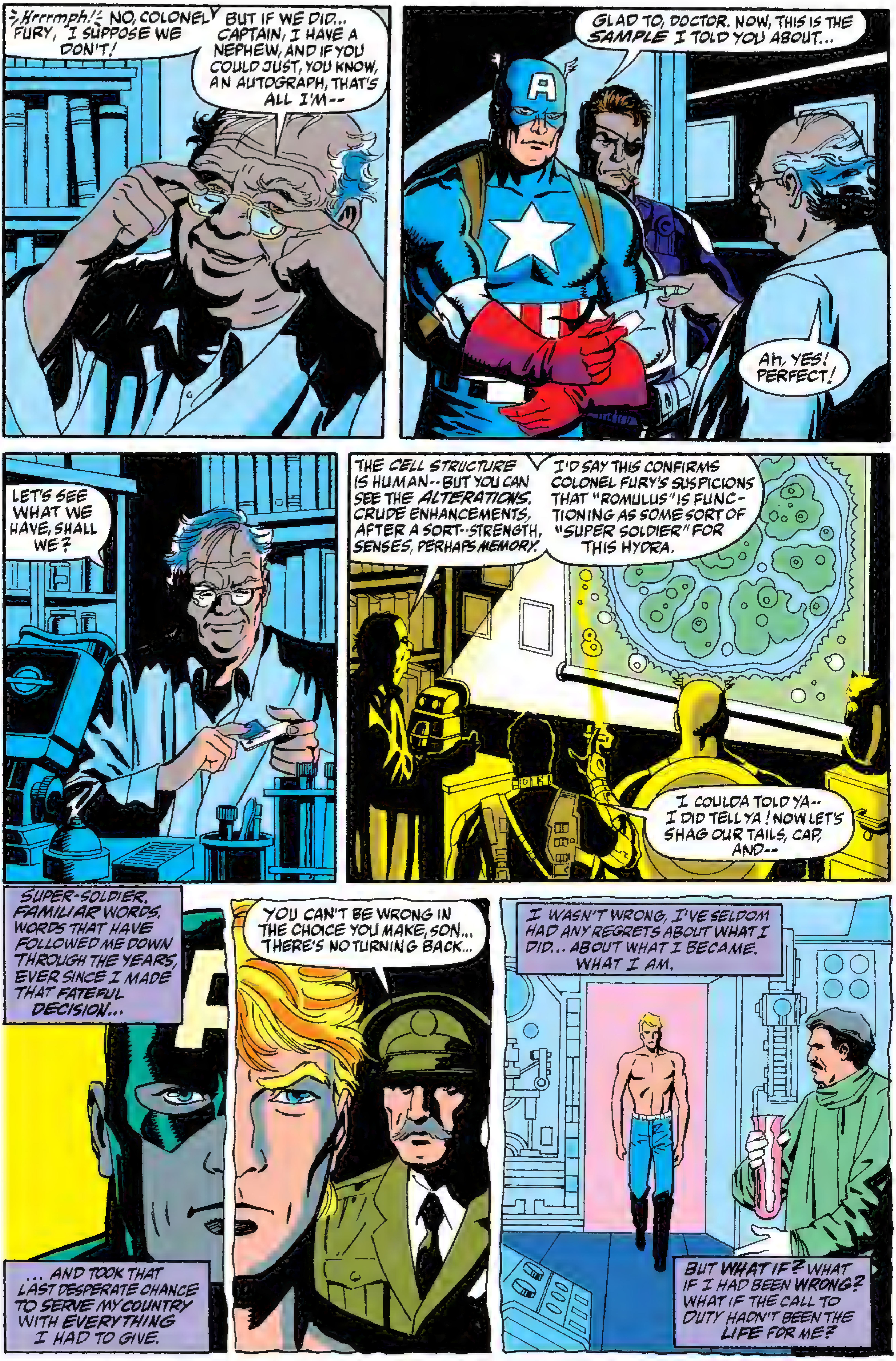

NO TIME TO WASTE.
YOU TWO ARE COMING WITH ME.
THOUGH MAYBE NOT ALL AT ONCE...
WE GOTTA TALK, CAP'N...
FURY
FURY!
SHE HAD HER ESCAPE PLANNED-- TRAINING AGAIN.
AND SHE GOT WHAT SHE CAME FOR. WHAT SHE NEEDED SO DESPERATELY.
PARTS. BODY PARTS.
NOT WHATCHA'D CALL A PRETTY SIGHT, IS IT?

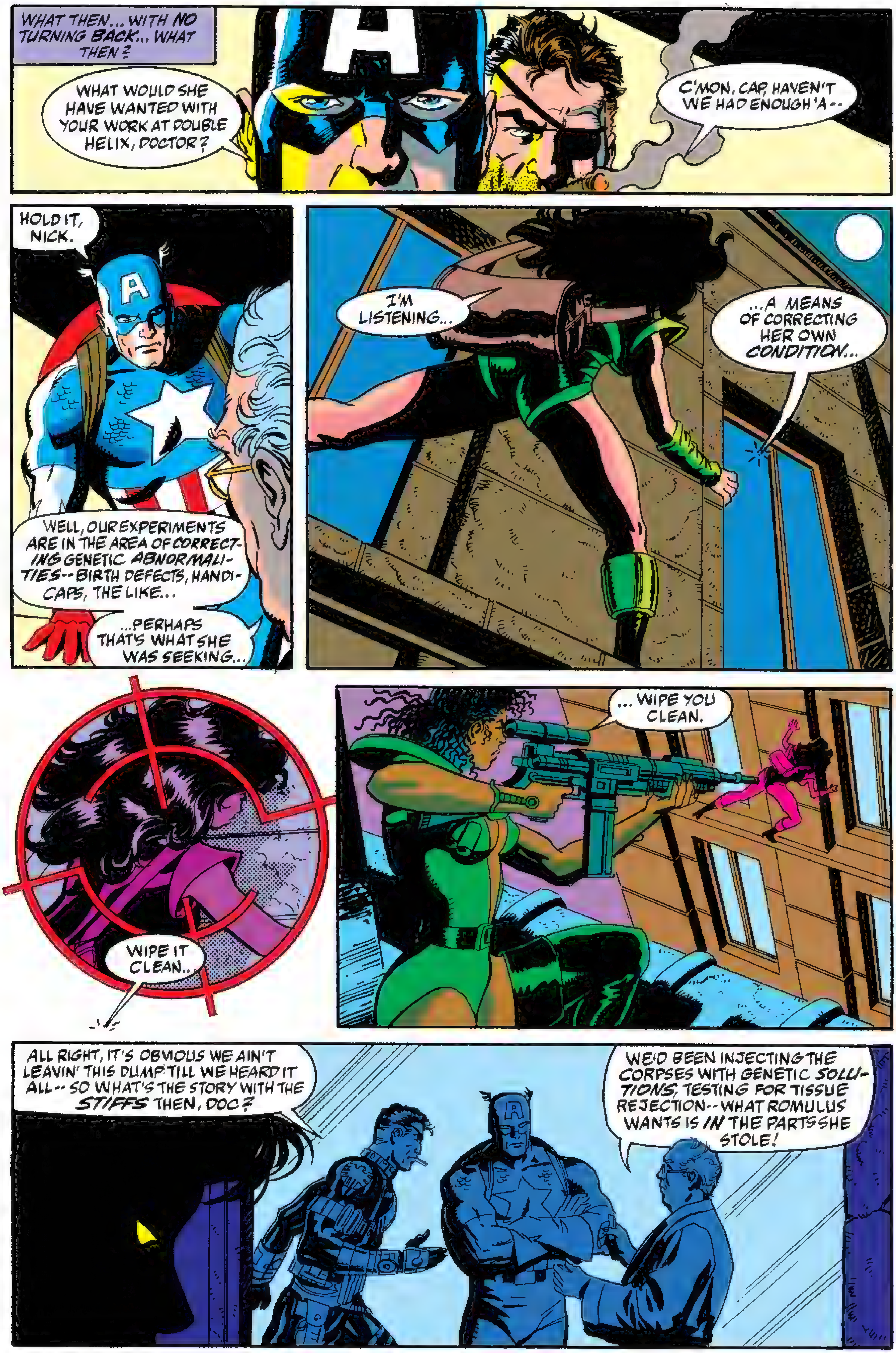
" ROOM'S TWENTY-TWO FIFTY A NIGHT... "
DRU
...SHEETS ARE TEN BUCKS EXTRA.
I DON'T SLEEP.
MAYBE YOU SHOULD. MIGHT DO SOMETHIN' FOR THAT LOUSY ATTITUDE A' YOURS!
AN' PEOPLE WONDER WHY NEW YORKERS ARE RUDE...
KLKT
RECORD.
DAKINI REPORTING.
HYDRA HUNT AND DESTROY OF ESCAPED GENETIC EXPERIMENTS PROCEEDING.
SECONDARY MISSION--TESTING OF EXPERIMENTS' CAPABILITIES BY BRINGING THEM IN CONTACT WITH SUBJECTS DAREDEVIL, PUNISHER AND CAPTAIN AMERICA--ALSO PROCEEDING.


THE LOUD MOUTH ATTACHED TO THE CHEAP CIGAR IS ONE COLONEL NICK FURY, TOP DOG OF SHIELD, OUR U.N.-SANCTIONED ESPIONAGE AGENCY.
YOU WERE THERE, CAP'N-- YOU SAW THE NUMBER THOSE HYDRA S.O.B.'s PULLED!
1500 SHIELD AGENTS DEAD-- 1500 GOOD AND DECENT MEN AND WOMEN-- KILLED BY THOSE SCUM!*
*IT HAPPENED IN THE S.H.I.E.L.D. MONTHLY SERIES. --Serious Ralf
WE'VE WORKED TOGETHER BEFORE-- WWII AND SINCE--BUT THIS TIME THERE'S SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT MY OLD ALLY.
I WISH WE HAD GOTTEN THERE SOONER, FURY, GOD AS MY WITNESS I DO, BUT--
YER WALTZIN' PARTNER FROM BEFORE-- ROMULUS, THEY CALL HER--SHE'S ONE OF A BUNCH OF 'EM WE'VE BEEN TRACKIN' ACROSS THE CITY. WE NAIL HER AN' WE CAN GET SOME ANSWERS ON WHO'S RUNNIN' THEIR TERRORIST SHOW.
THERE'S SOMETHING DANGEROUSLY ON THE EDGE ABOUT NICK.
I WANT THOSE ANSWERS, CAP-- I'M GONNA GET 'EM!
WHAT ABOUT TAKING OFF THOSE BLINDERS, FURY, AND GETTING ANSWERS ON WHAT SHE WAS UP TO HERE TONIGHT?
HEY--!
TISSUE RESIDUE--FROM WHEN SHE HIT MY SHIELD.
DOUBLE HELIX IS A GENETICS LAB-- I WANT TO SEE IF THERE'S ANYTHING THEIR PEOPLE CAN TELL US ABOUT THIS ROMULUS.

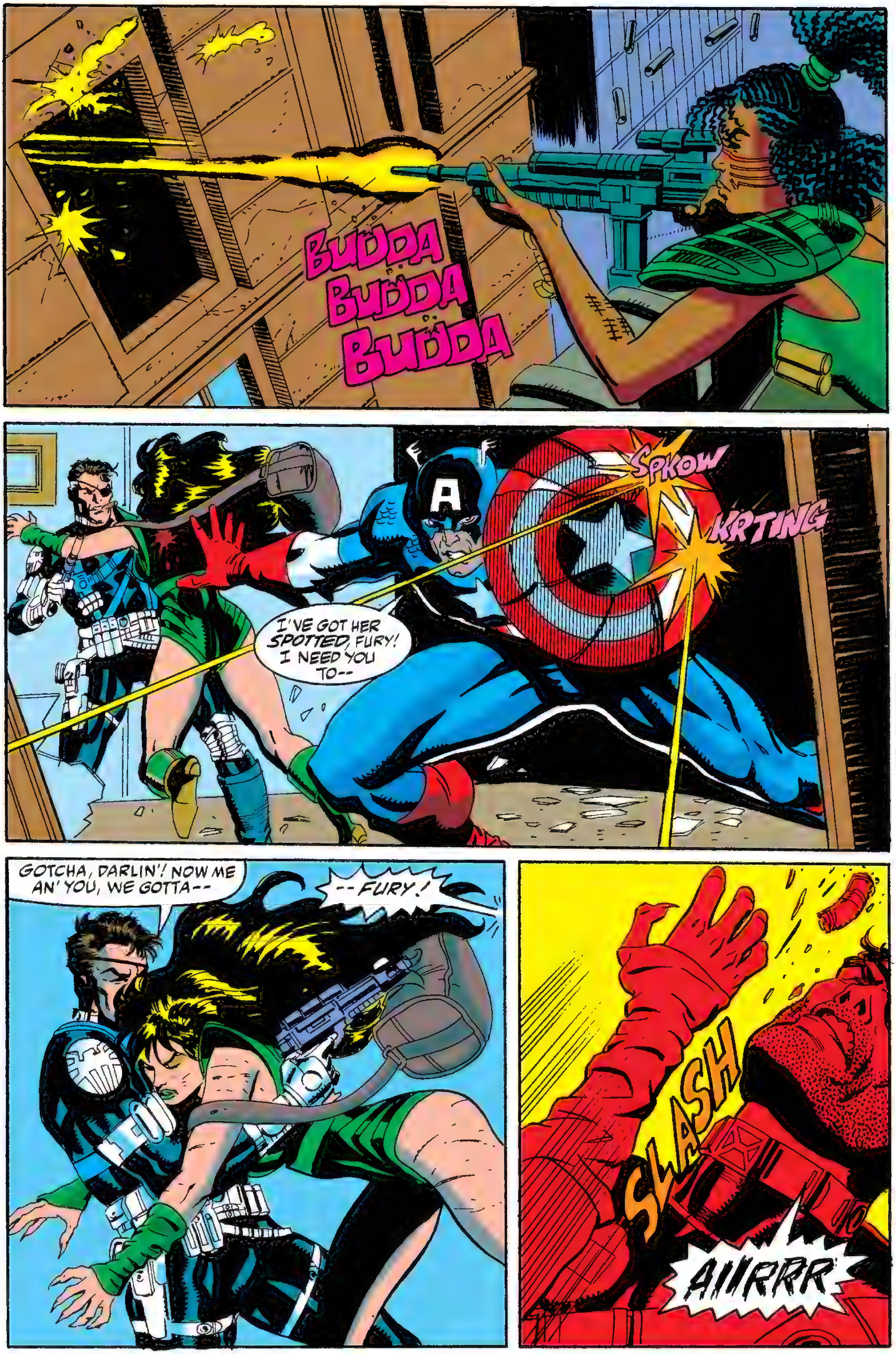

STATUS--HUNTER CRIPPLER'S INCOMPETENCE BROUGHT EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECT SATHAN INTO HANDS OF BOTH DAREDEVIL AND ESPIONAGE AGENCY S.H.I.E.L.D.* CRIPPLER DEFECTED, SATHAN EXECUTED.
STATUS--HUNTER TAKIMOTO'S TWISTED SENSE OF HONOR RESULTED IN ALLIANCE WITH VIGILANTE PUNISHER. TAKIMOTO KILLED, EXPERIMENT GUILLOTINE DAMAGED IN RETURN TO HYDRA.
*STRATEGIC HAZARD INTERVENTION, ESPIONAGE, AND LOGISTICS DIRECTORATE. --R.A.L.F.
"ANONYMOUS" PHONE CALL TO CIVILIAN AUTHORITIES ON EXPERIMENT ROMULUS' ACTIVITIES INSTIGATED INVOLVEMENT OF CAPTAIN AMERICA. CONTINUING OBSERVATION.
PERSONAL NOTE. WHILE NOT QUESTIONING HYDRA LEADER BARON VON STRUCKER'S ORDERS, I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL THERE'S MORE TO WHAT HE WOULD HAVE US DO.
THESE FAILURES... THESE GENETIC THINGS... THEY STAIN THE REPUTATION OF THIS GRAND NEW HYDRA ORGANIZATION YOU HAVE BUILT, MY BARON... ONE DEDICATED TO WORLD CONQUEST.
I'LL WIPE IT CLEAN.
TRANSMIT.
I CAN'T HAVE THAT.
I'LL WIPE THE STAIN CLEAN FOR YOU, MY BARON.
DESTRUCT.
HRRRSSSS

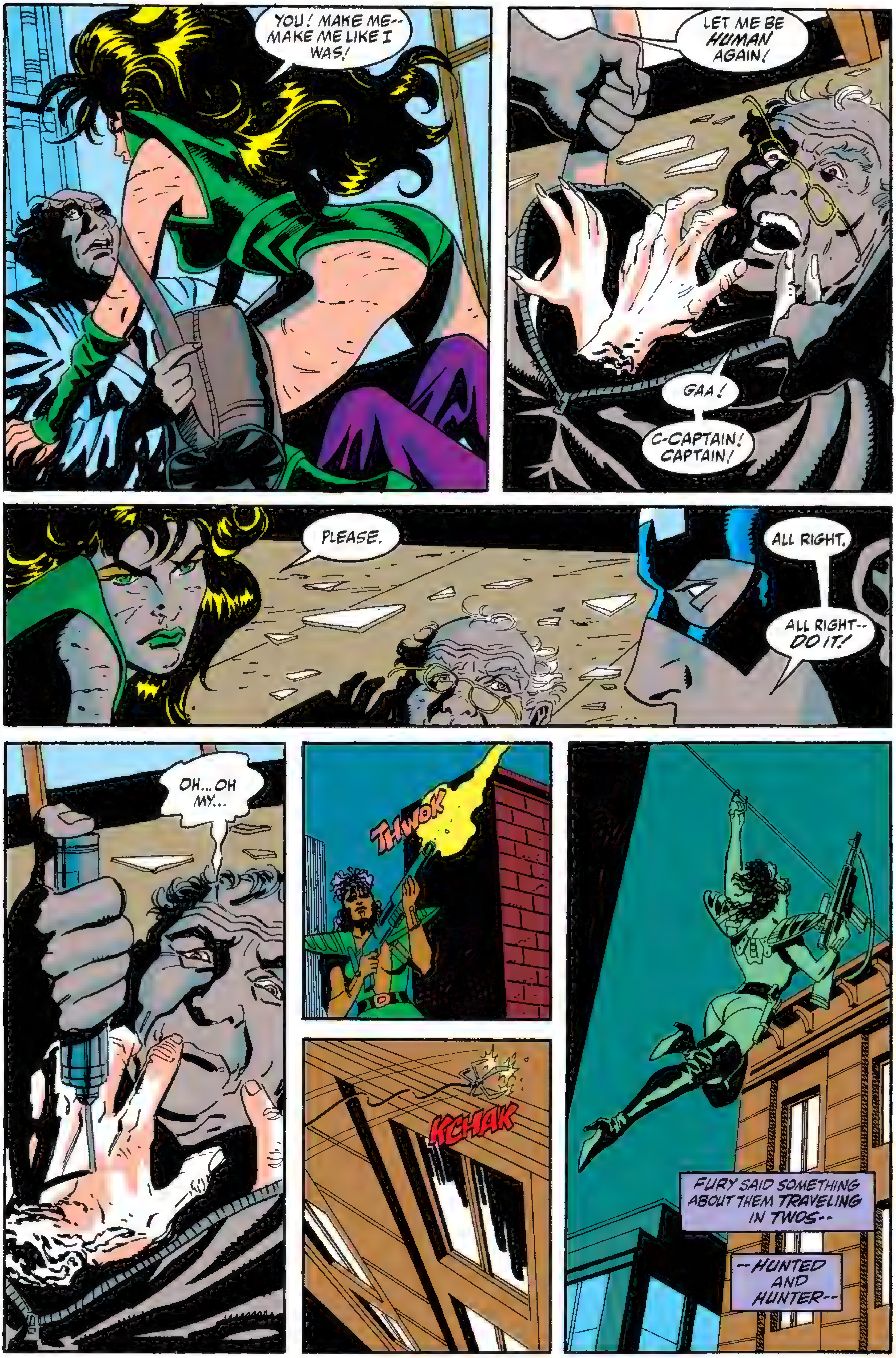

BLASTED WASTE'A TIME, ALL WE GOTTA DO IS FIND HER AN'--
THEIR HEAD HONCHO'S A Dr. JONATHAN FISHMAN. YOU WANT A LIFT HIS WAY, OR CAN YOU--
KLK
I GOT MY OWN, I GOT MY OWN!
SORT OF LOSES SOMETHING IN THE TRANSLATION, DOESN'T IT?
"... AND SO WE WERE HOPING YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO GIVE US SOME INSIGHT, DR. FISHMAN."
ME? GIVE INSIGHT? TO YOU?
THIS IS AN HONOR, CAPTAIN AMERICA, AN--
PUT YOUR TONGUE BACK IN YER MOUTH AND GET WITH THE PROGRAM, DOC! WE AIN'T GOT ALL NIGHT!

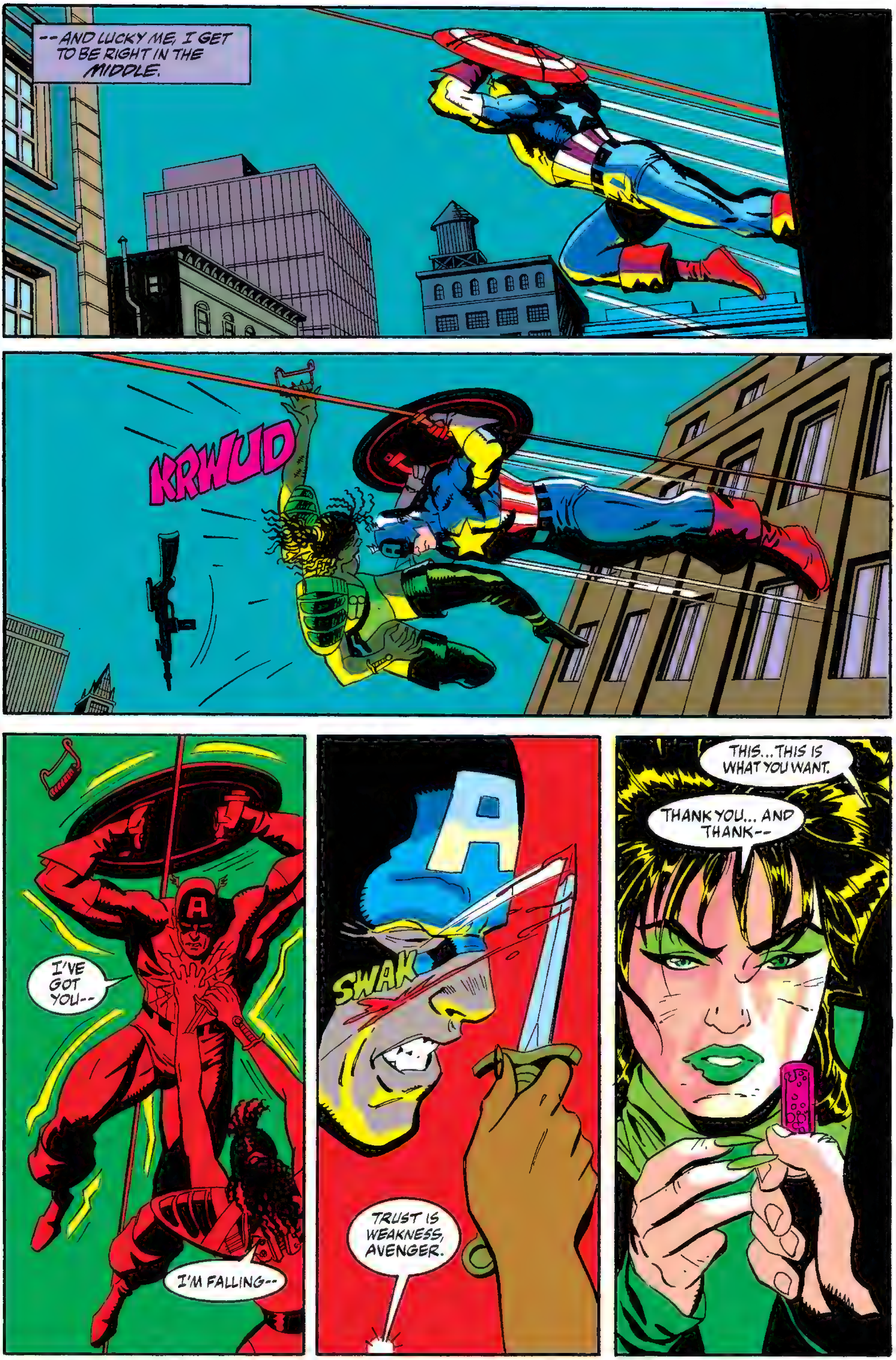

Hrrrmph! NO, COLONEL FURY, I SUPPOSE WE DON'T!
BUT IF WE DID... CAPTAIN, I HAVE A NEPHEW, AND IF YOU COULD JUST, YOU KNOW, AN AUTOGRAPH, THAT'S ALL I'M--
GLAD TO, DOCTOR. NOW, THIS IS THE *SAMPLE* I TOLD YOU ABOUT...
Ah, YES! PERFECT!
LET'S SEE WHAT WE HAVE, SHALL WE?
THE *CELL STRUCTURE* IS HUMAN--BUT YOU CAN SEE THE *ALTERATIONS*. CRUDE ENHANCEMENTS, AFTER A SORT--STRENGTH, SENSES, PERHAPS MEMORY.
I'D SAY THIS CONFIRMS COLONEL FURY'S SUSPICIONS THAT "ROMULUS" IS FUNCTIONING AS SOME SORT OF "SUPER SOLDIER" FOR THIS HYDRA.
I COULDA TOLD YA-- I DID TELL YA! NOW LET'S SHAG OUR TAILS, CAP, AND--
SUPER-SOLDIER. *FAMILIAR WORDS.* WORDS THAT HAVE FOLLOWED ME DOWN THROUGH THE YEARS, EVER SINCE I MADE THAT FATEFUL DECISION...
...AND TOOK THAT LAST DESPERATE CHANCE TO SERVE MY COUNTRY WITH *EVERYTHING* I HAD TO GIVE.
YOU CAN'T BE WRONG IN THE CHOICE YOU MAKE, SON... THERE'S NO TURNING BACK...
I WASN'T WRONG. I'VE SELDOM HAD ANY REGRETS ABOUT WHAT I DID... ABOUT WHAT I BECAME. WHAT I AM.
BUT *WHAT IF?* WHAT IF I HAD BEEN *WRONG?* WHAT IF THE CALL TO DUTY HADN'T BEEN THE *LIFE* FOR ME?

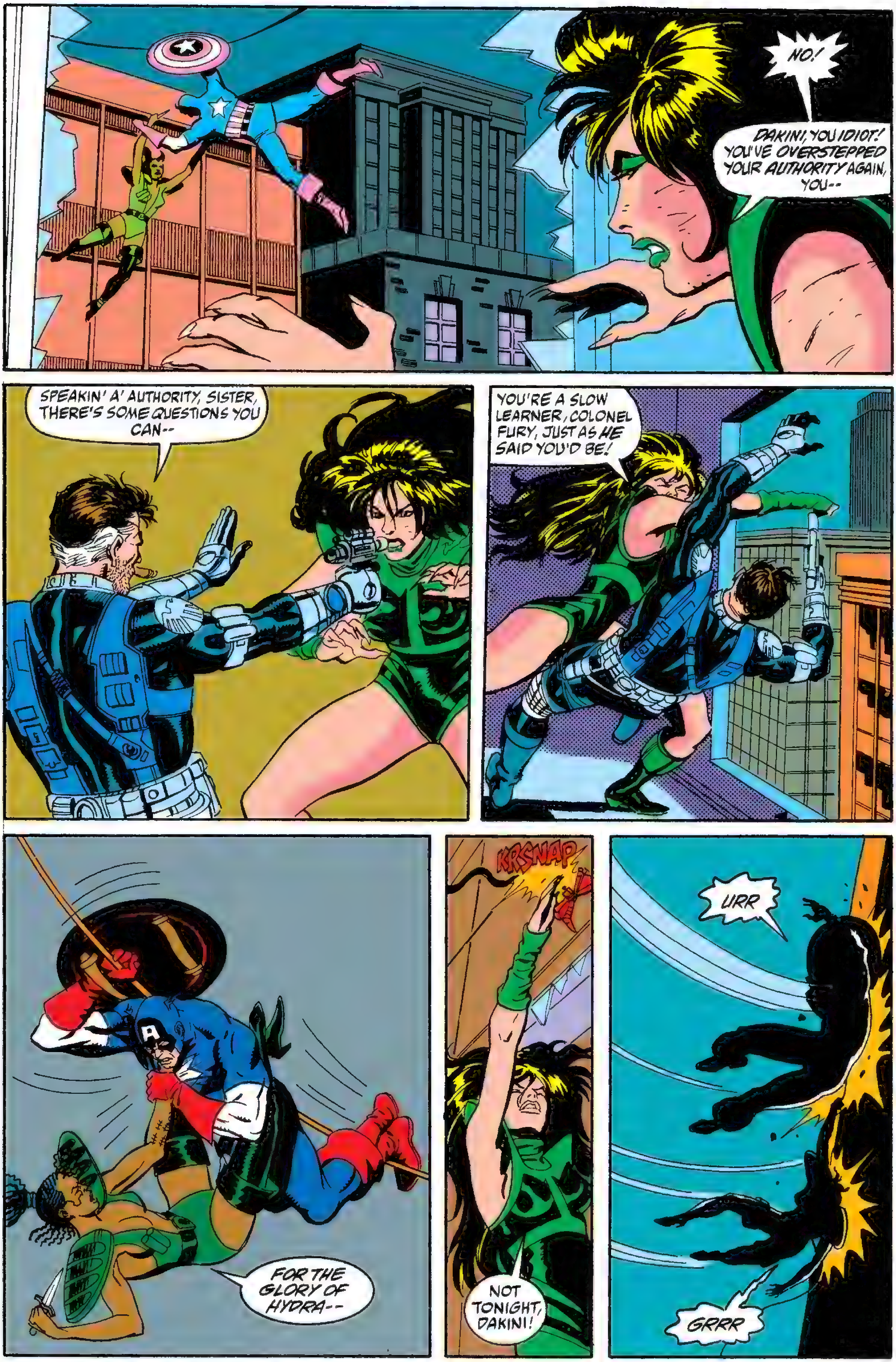

WHAT THEN... WITH NO TURNING BACK... WHAT THEN?
WHAT WOULD SHE HAVE WANTED WITH YOUR WORK AT DOUBLE HELIX, DOCTOR?
C'MON, CAP, HAVEN'T WE HAD ENOUGH 'A--
HOLD IT, NICK.
WELL, OUR EXPERIMENTS ARE IN THE AREA OF CORRECTING GENETIC ABNORMALITIES--BIRTH DEFECTS, HANDICAPS, THE LIKE...
...PERHAPS THAT'S WHAT SHE WAS SEEKING...
I'M LISTENING...
...A MEANS OF CORRECTING HER OWN CONDITION...
WIPE IT CLEAN..
... WIPE YOU CLEAN.
ALL RIGHT, IT'S OBVIOUS WE AIN'T LEAVIN' THIS DUMP TILL WE HEARD IT ALL-- SO WHAT'S THE STORY WITH THE STIFFS THEN, DOC?
WE'D BEEN INJECTING THE CORPSES WITH GENETIC SOLUTIONS, TESTING FOR TISSUE REJECTION--WHAT ROMULUS WANTS IS IN THE PARTS SHE STOLE!

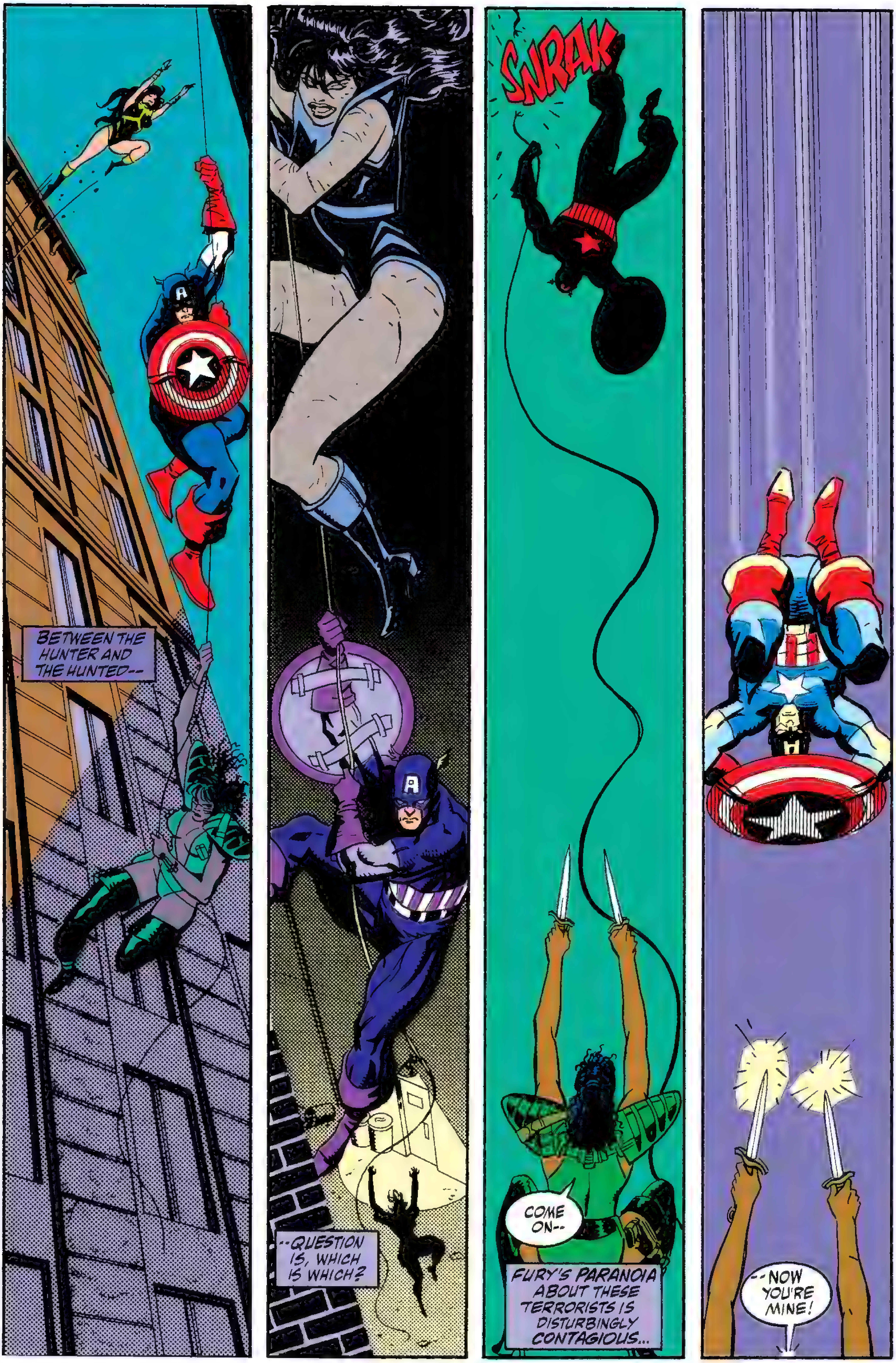
SO WHAT? SHE'S GOT TO HAVE A CORPSE-CASSEROLE?
HARDLY, COLONEL. THE SOLUTION WOULD NEED TO BE DRAWN OUT AND DISTILLED TO BE USEFUL. I DO WISH YOU COULD FIND IT IN YOUR HEART TO TREAT MY WORK WITH A LITTLE MORE OF THE RESPECT IT--
THE DOCTOR CAN HOLD HIS OWN AGAINST FURY--NO SMALL FEAT THERE--BUT IT'S NOT THE TWO OF THEM I'M WORRIED ABOUT. IT'S THE GLINT OF GLASS FROM ACROSS THE WAY--
--A SNIPER'S SCOPE--
DOWN!
--THE MUZZLE FLARE--
KRCHOW
--THE BATTLE-FRONT COME ROUND AGAIN.
CHUP
KEE
RASH

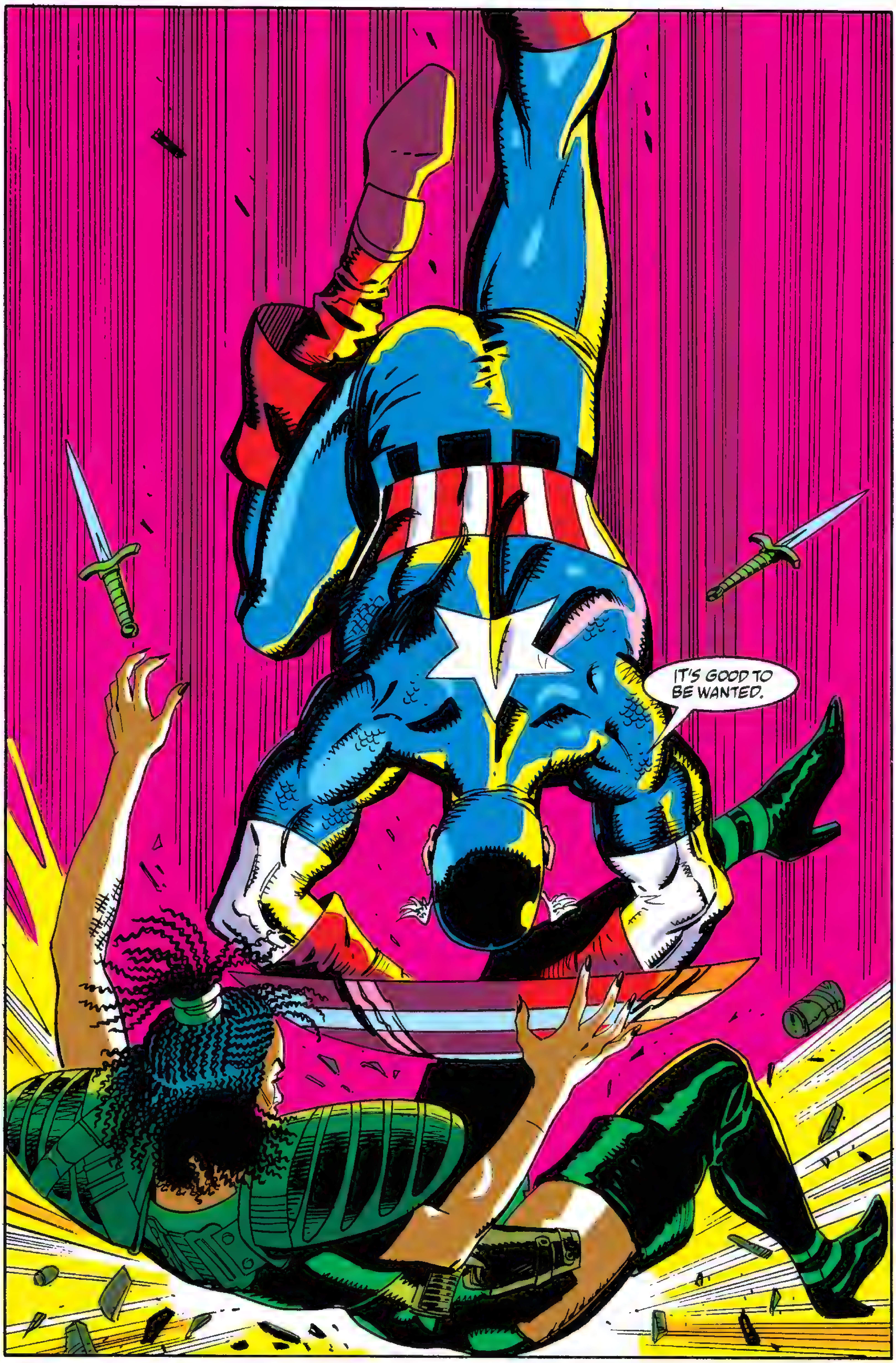

BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA
SPKOW
KRTING
I'VE GOT HER SPOTTED, FURY! I NEED YOU TO--
GOTCHA, DARLIN'! NOW ME AN' YOU, WE GOTTA--
--FURY!
SLASH
AIIRRR

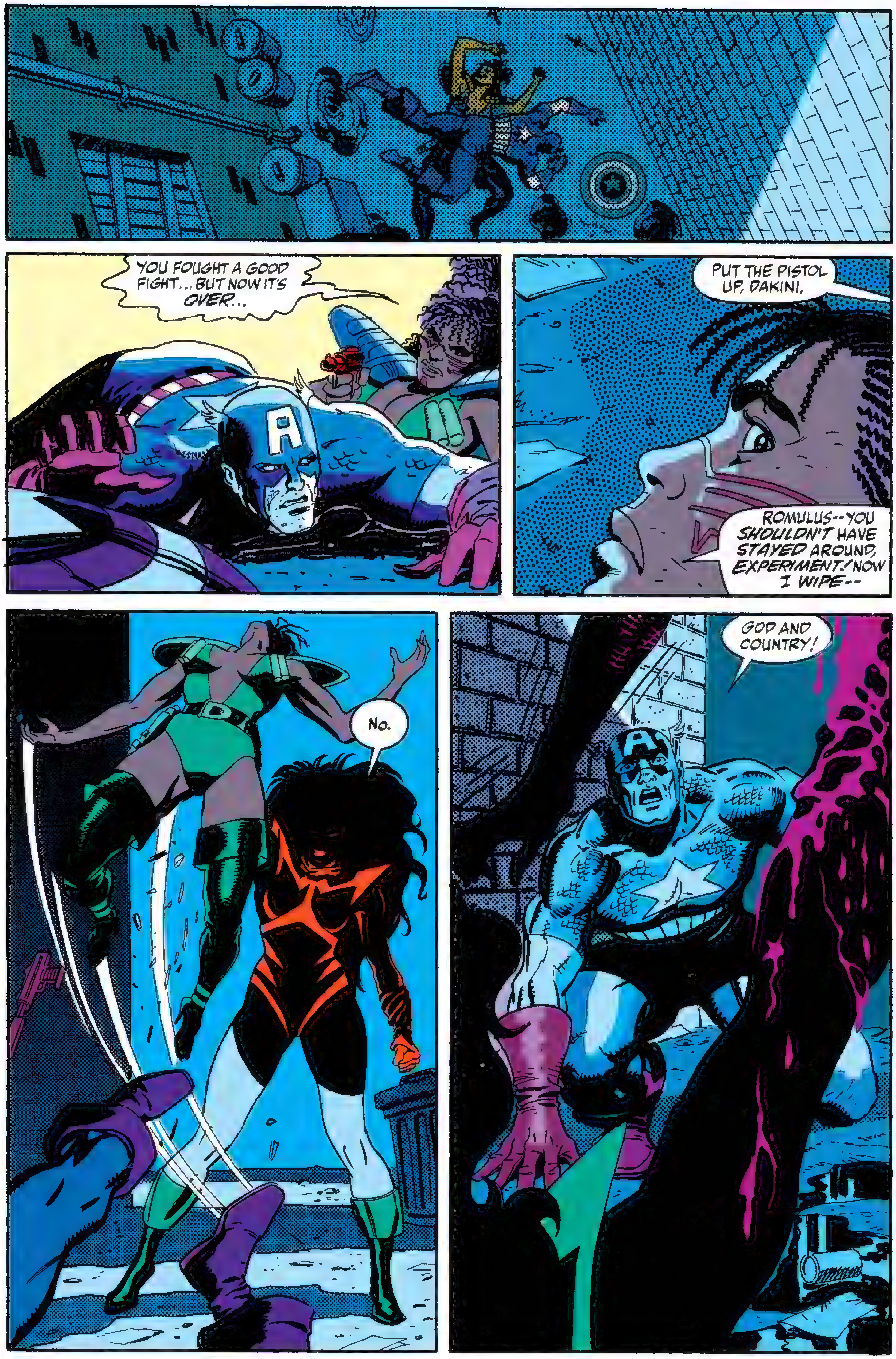

YOU! MAKE ME-- MAKE ME LIKE I WAS!
LET ME BE *HUMAN* AGAIN!
GAA!
C-CAPTAIN! CAPTAIN!
PLEASE.
ALL RIGHT.
ALL RIGHT-- *DO IT!*
OH...OH MY...
THWOK
KCHAK
FURY SAID SOMETHING ABOUT THEM TRAVELING IN TWOS--
--HUNTED AND HUNTER--


--AND LUCKY ME, I GET TO BE RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE.
KRWUD
I'VE GOT YOU--
I'M FALLING--
SWAK
TRUST IS WEAKNESS, AVENGER.
THIS... THIS IS WHAT YOU WANT.
THANK YOU... AND THANK--

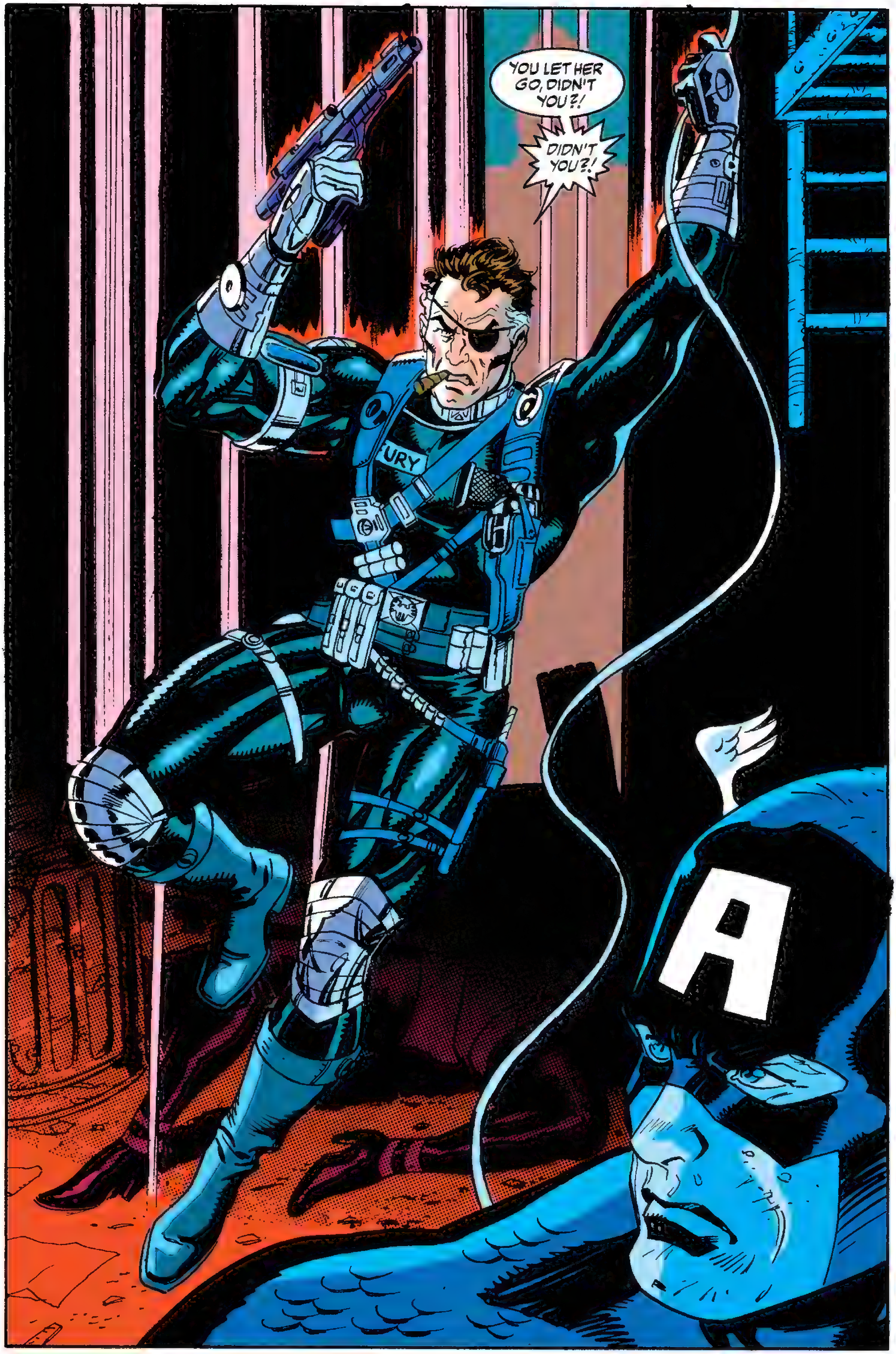

NO!
DAKINI, YOU IDIOT! YOU'VE OVERSTEPPED YOUR AUTHORITY AGAIN, YOU--
SPEAKIN' A' AUTHORITY, SISTER, THERE'S SOME QUESTIONS YOU CAN--
YOU'RE A SLOW LEARNER, COLONEL FURY, JUST AS HE SAID YOU'D BE!
FOR THE GLORY OF HYDRA--
KRSNAP
NOT TONIGHT, DAKINI!
URR
GRRR


BETWEEN THE HUNTER AND THE HUNTED--
--QUESTION IS, WHICH IS WHICH?
SNRAK
COME ON--
FURY'S PARANOIA ABOUT THESE TERRORISTS IS DISTURBINGLY CONTAGIOUS...
--NOW YOU'RE MINE!

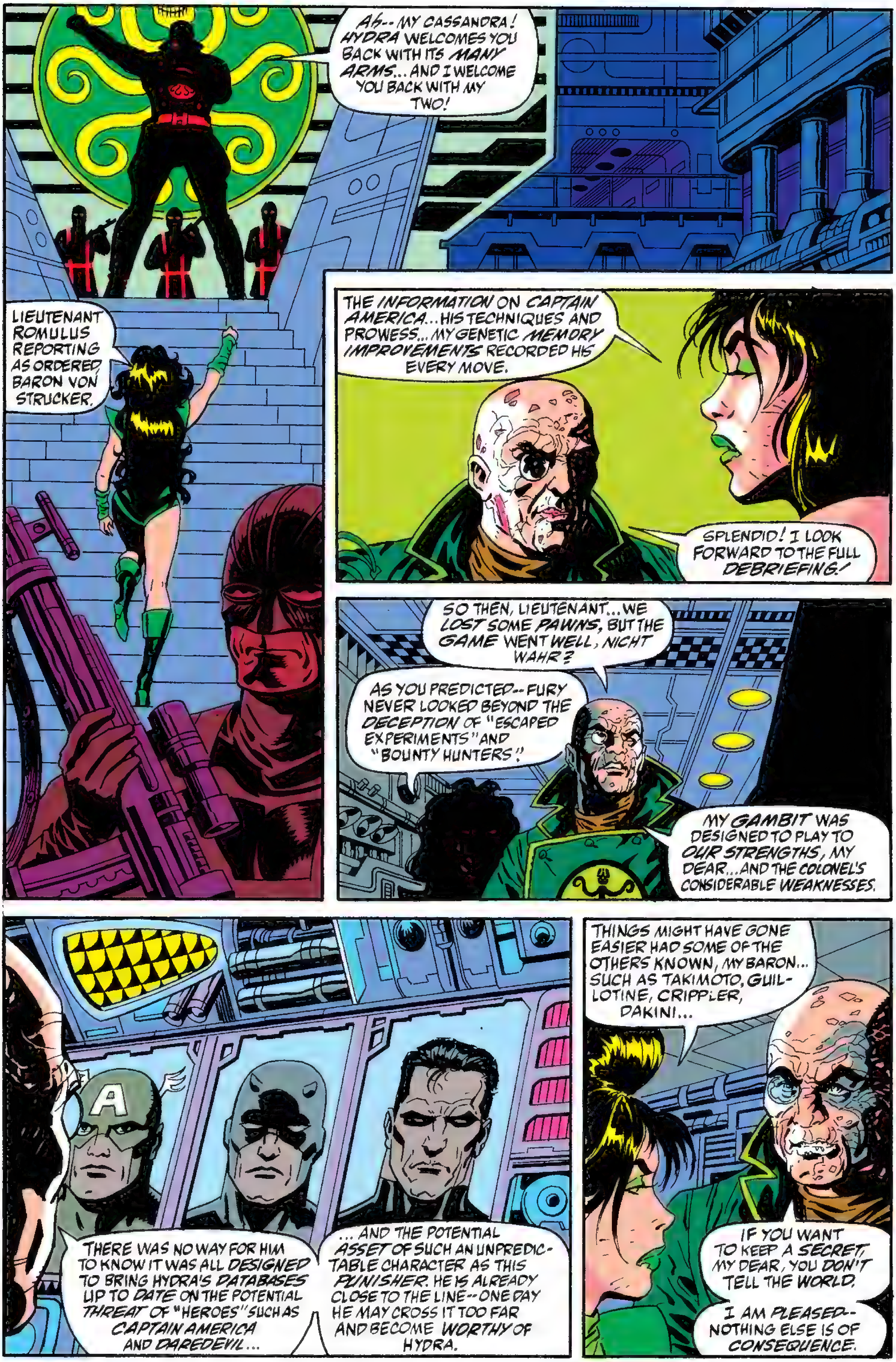

IT'S GOOD TO BE WANTED.

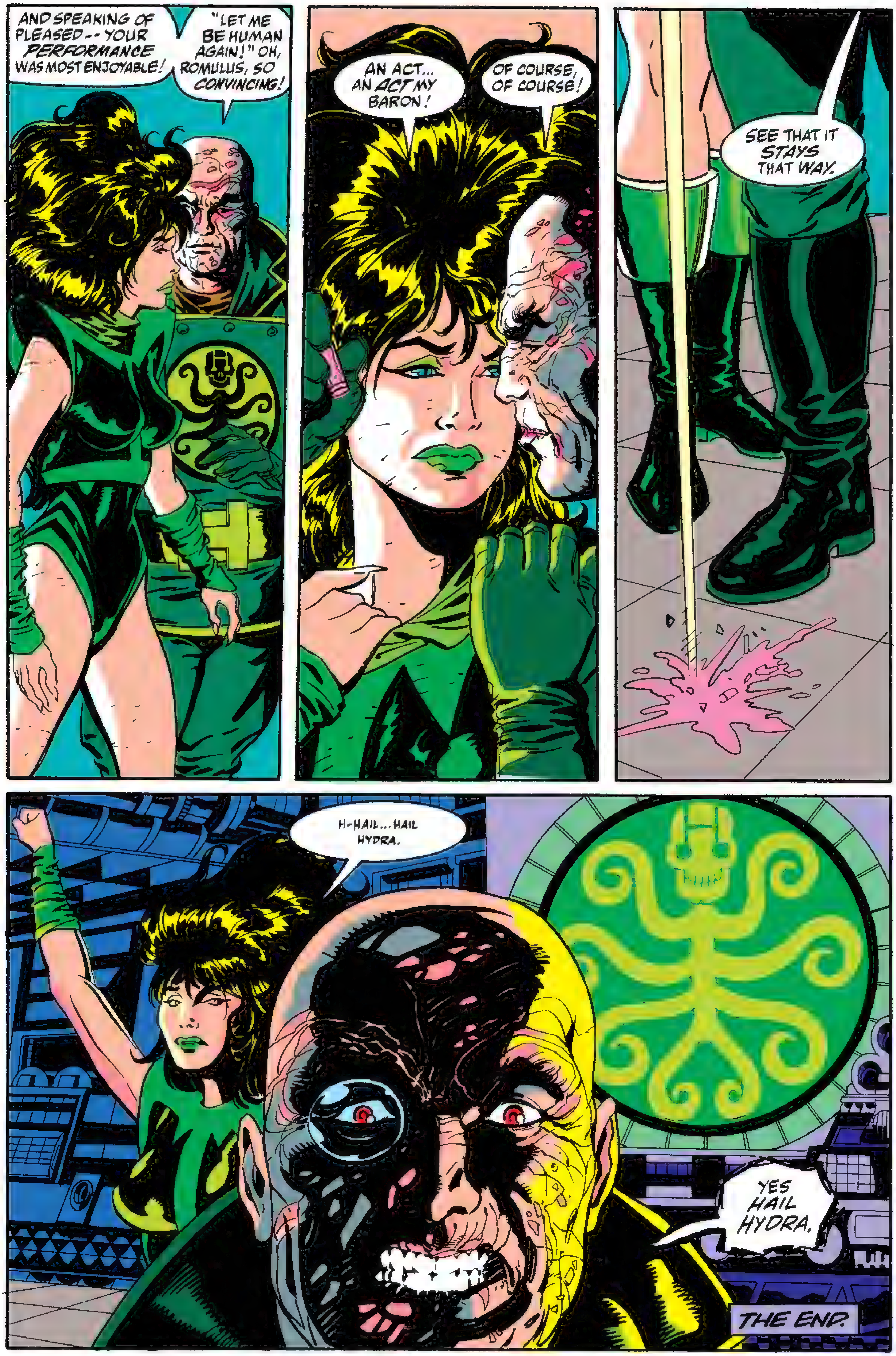

YOU FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT... BUT NOW IT'S OVER...
PUT THE PISTOL UP, DAKINI.
ROMULUS--YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE STAYED AROUND, EXPERIMENT! NOW I WIPE--
No.
GOD AND COUNTRY!

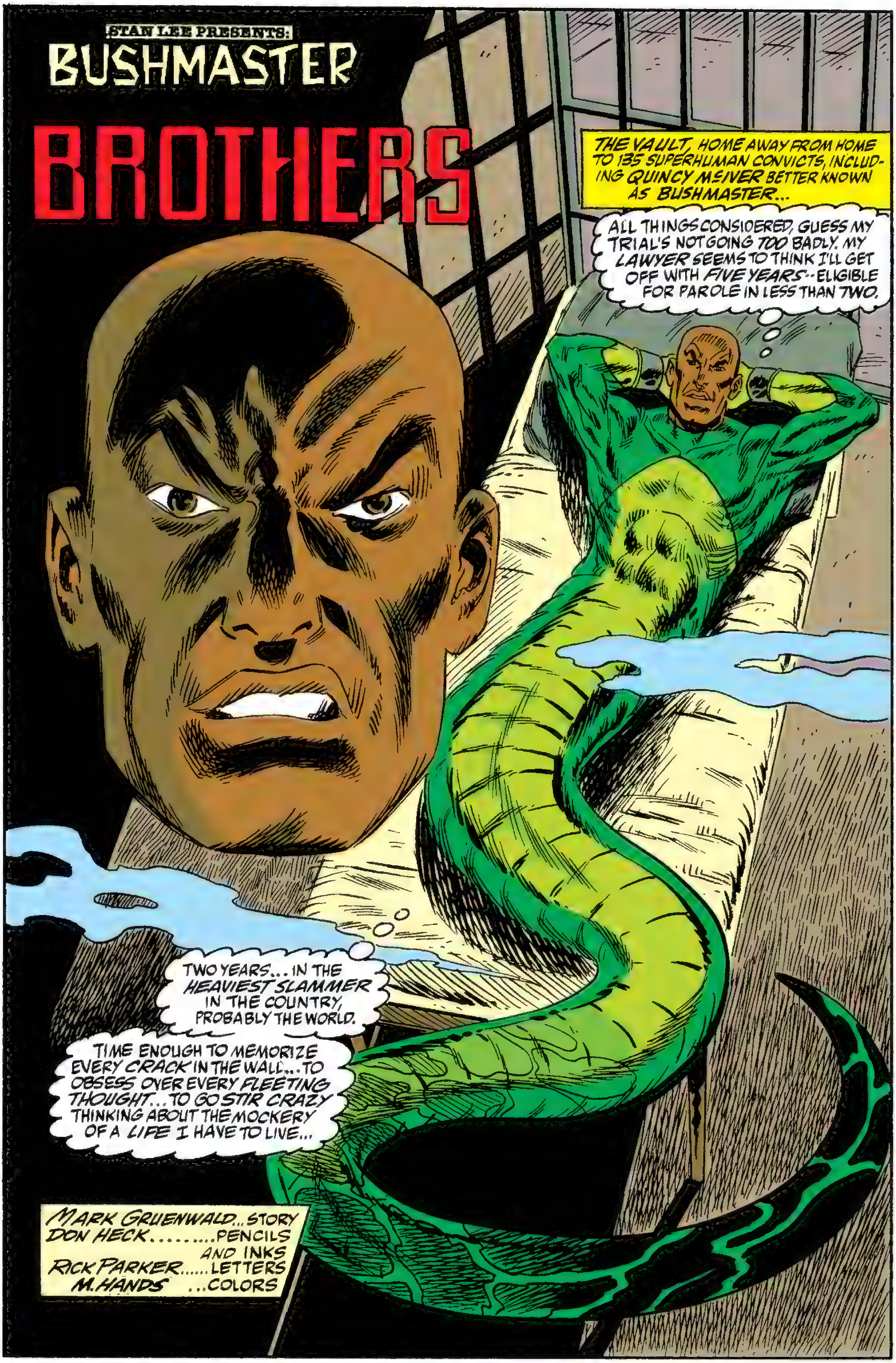
I'M AN ANIMAL...
WHY? WHY DID THEY DO THIS TO YOU?
BECAUSE I ASKED THEM TO. BECAUSE I THOUGHT IT WAS WHAT I WANTED... AND I WAS WRONG!
AND NOW THERE'S NO GOING BACK IS THERE? YOU ONLY GET TO CHOOSE ONCE...
USUALLY.
BUT TONIGHT... USE THE SERUM. GET YOUR LIFE BACK!
I MAKE A TOUGH CHOICE-- ALLOW HER TO LEAVE. SHE IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR HER ACTIONS TONIGHT.
AND DAKINI STILL LIVES. SHE MAY SURVIVE WITH IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION.
I WON'T FORGET THIS, CAPTAIN. I PROMISE YOU.

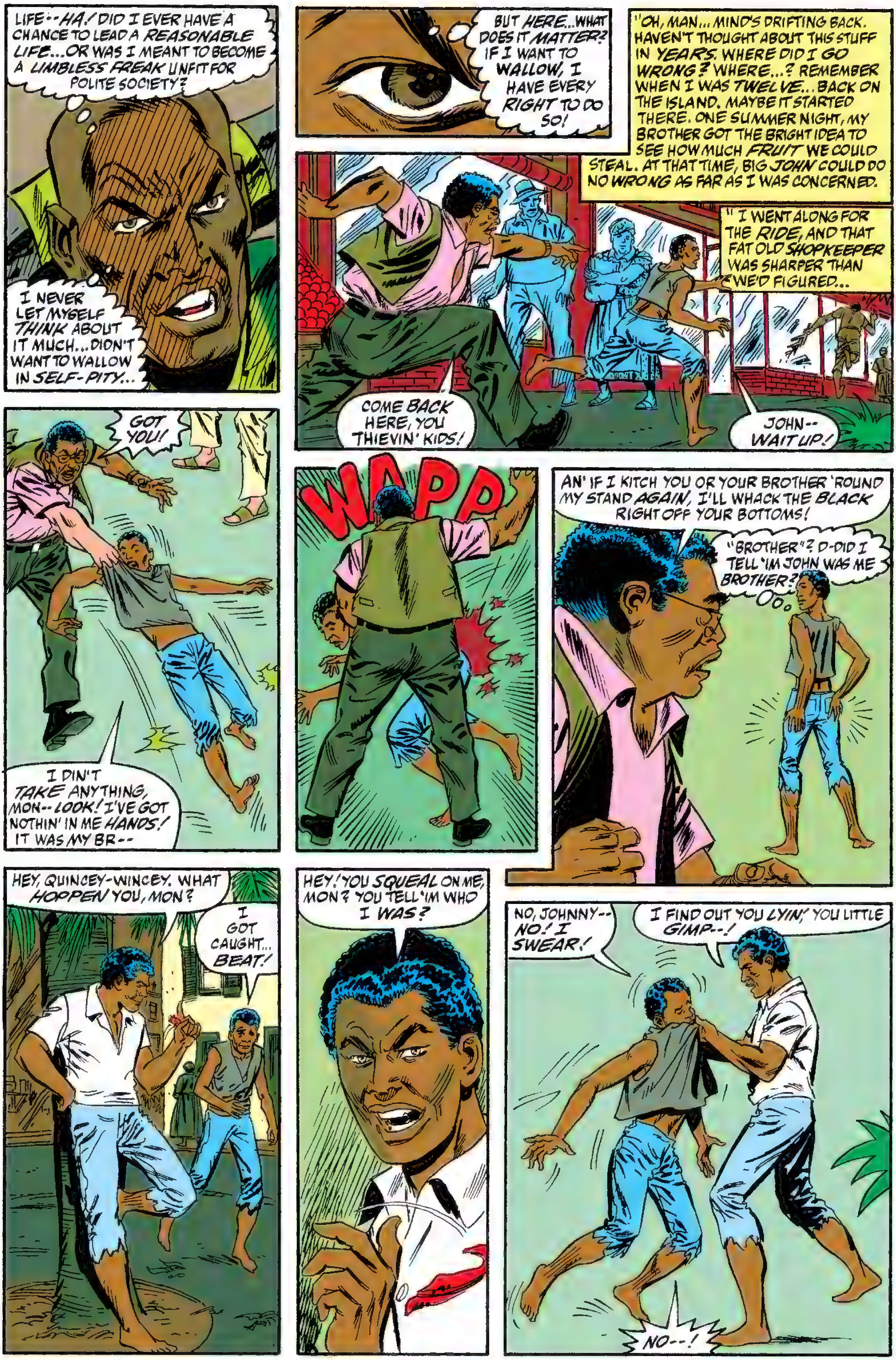

YOU LET HER GO, DIDN'T YOU?!
DIDN'T YOU?!
URY

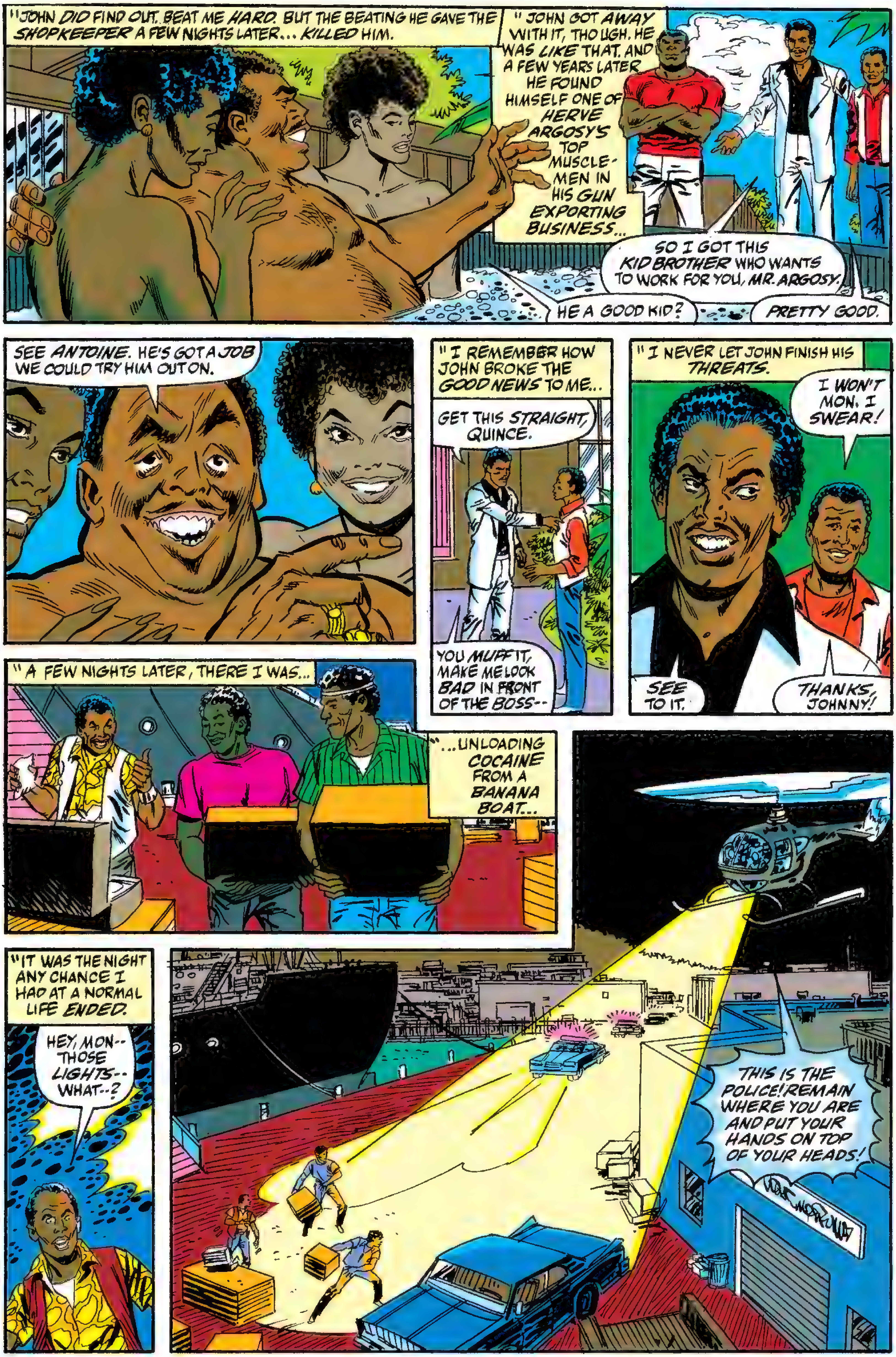
I TOLD YOU-- WE HAVE TO KNOW WHAT THIS NEW HYDRA IS-- WHO'S BACKING THEM! DIDN'T YOU LISTEN?
WHEN DID YOU START RUNNING WITH DOGS, CAP?
UNNH
AND WHEN DID THIS START BEING NICK FURY'S PRIVATE LITTLE WAR? AND STOP BEING ABOUT HUMAN BEINGS?
DON'T EXPECT ME TO OFFER YOU A RIDE THIS TIME.
I'VE GOT A LIFE TO SAVE.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND... THEY KILLED THEM -- SO MANY OF MY MEN-- AND... YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND...

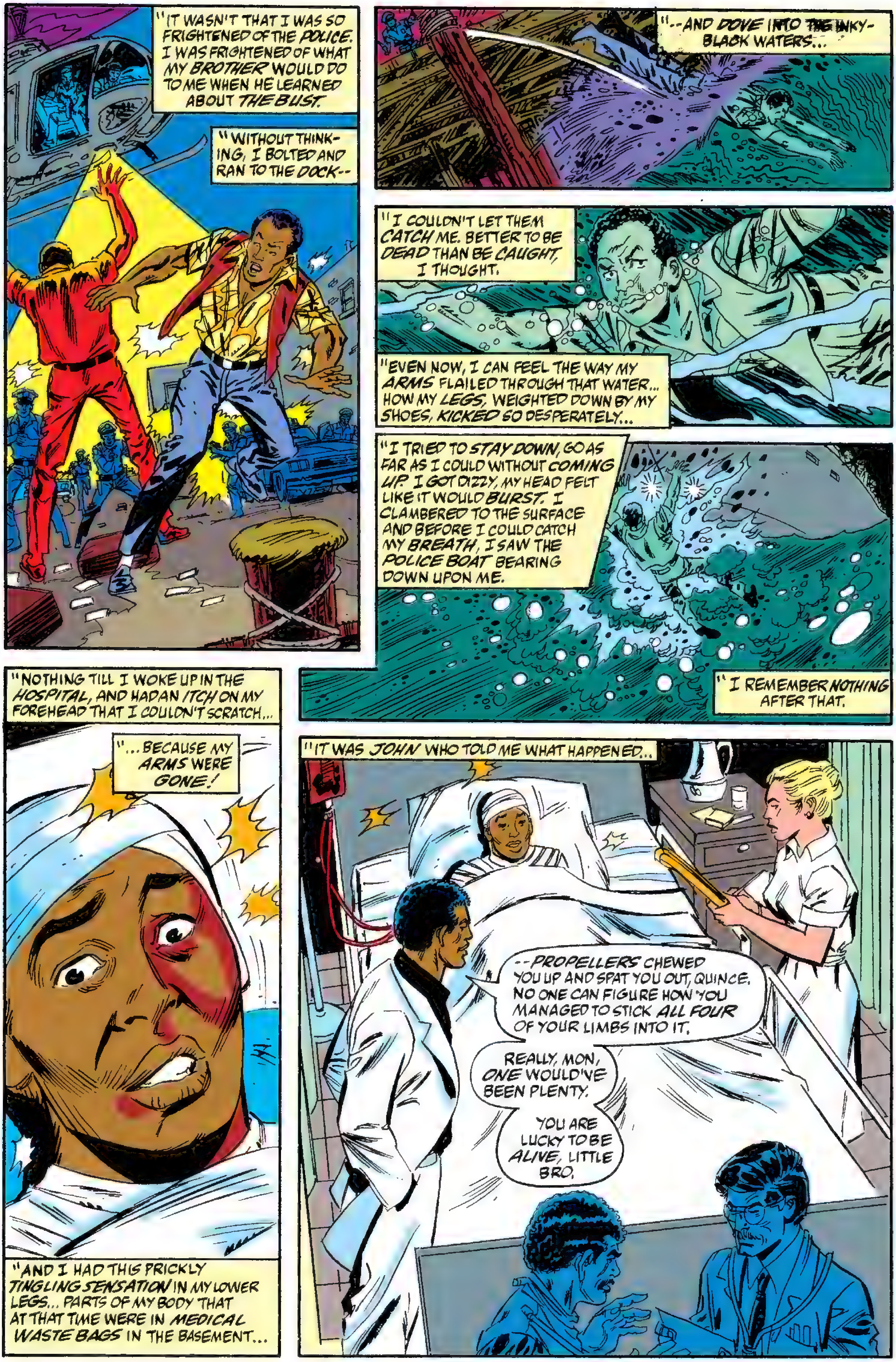

AH-- MY CASSANDRA! HYDRA WELCOMES YOU BACK WITH ITS MANY ARMS... AND I WELCOME YOU BACK WITH MY TWO!
LIEUTENANT ROMULUS REPORTING AS ORDERED, BARON VON STRUCKER.
THE INFORMATION ON CAPTAIN AMERICA... HIS TECHNIQUES AND PROWESS... MY GENETIC MEMORY IMPROVEMENTS RECORDED HIS EVERY MOVE.
SPLENDID! I LOOK FORWARD TO THE FULL DEBRIEFING!
SO THEN, LIEUTENANT... WE LOST SOME PAWNS, BUT THE GAME WENT WELL, NICHT WAHR?
AS YOU PREDICTED-- FURY NEVER LOOKED BEYOND THE DECEPTION OF "ESCAPED EXPERIMENTS" AND "BOUNTY HUNTERS"!
MY GAMBIT WAS DESIGNED TO PLAY TO OUR STRENGTHS, MY DEAR... AND THE COLONEL'S CONSIDERABLE WEAKNESSES.
THERE WAS NO WAY FOR HIM TO KNOW IT WAS ALL DESIGNED TO BRING HYDRA'S DATABASES UP TO DATE ON THE POTENTIAL THREAT OF "HEROES" SUCH AS CAPTAIN AMERICA AND DAREDEVIL...
... AND THE POTENTIAL ASSET OF SUCH AN UNPREDICTABLE CHARACTER AS THIS PUNISHER. HE IS ALREADY CLOSE TO THE LINE-- ONE DAY HE MAY CROSS IT TOO FAR AND BECOME WORTHY OF HYDRA.
THINGS MIGHT HAVE GONE EASIER HAD SOME OF THE OTHERS KNOWN, MY BARON... SUCH AS TAKIMOTO, GUILLOTINE, CRIPPLER, DAKINI...
IF YOU WANT TO KEEP A SECRET, MY DEAR, YOU DON'T TELL THE WORLD.
I AM PLEASED-- NOTHING ELSE IS OF CONSEQUENCE.

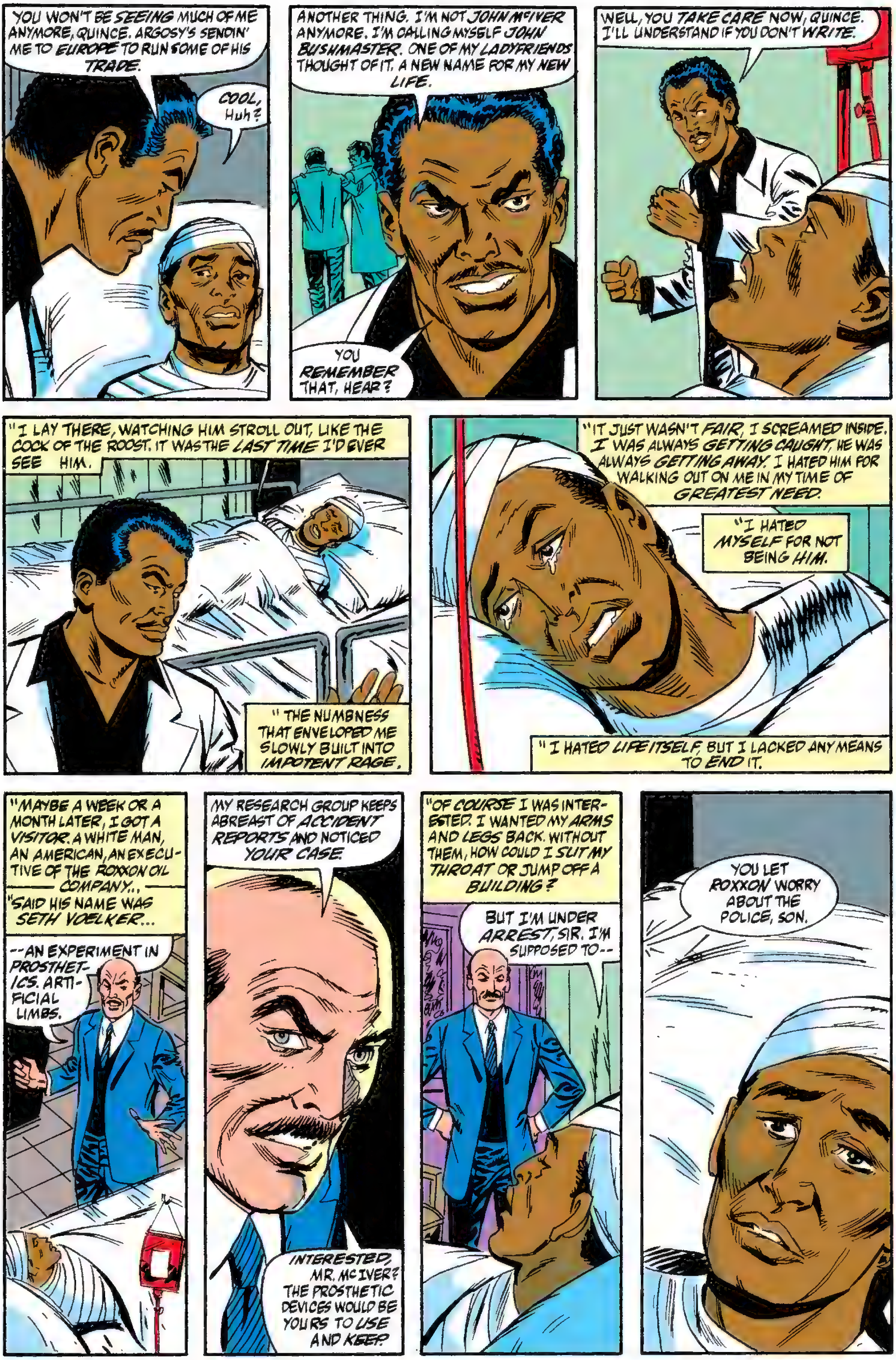

AND SPEAKING OF PLEASED-- YOUR PERFORMANCE WAS MOST ENJOYABLE!
"LET ME BE HUMAN AGAIN!" OH, ROMULUS, SO CONVINCING!
AN ACT... AN ACT MY BARON!
OF COURSE, OF COURSE!
SEE THAT IT STAYS THAT WAY.
H-HAIL... HAIL HYDRA.
YES HAIL HYDRA.
THE END.

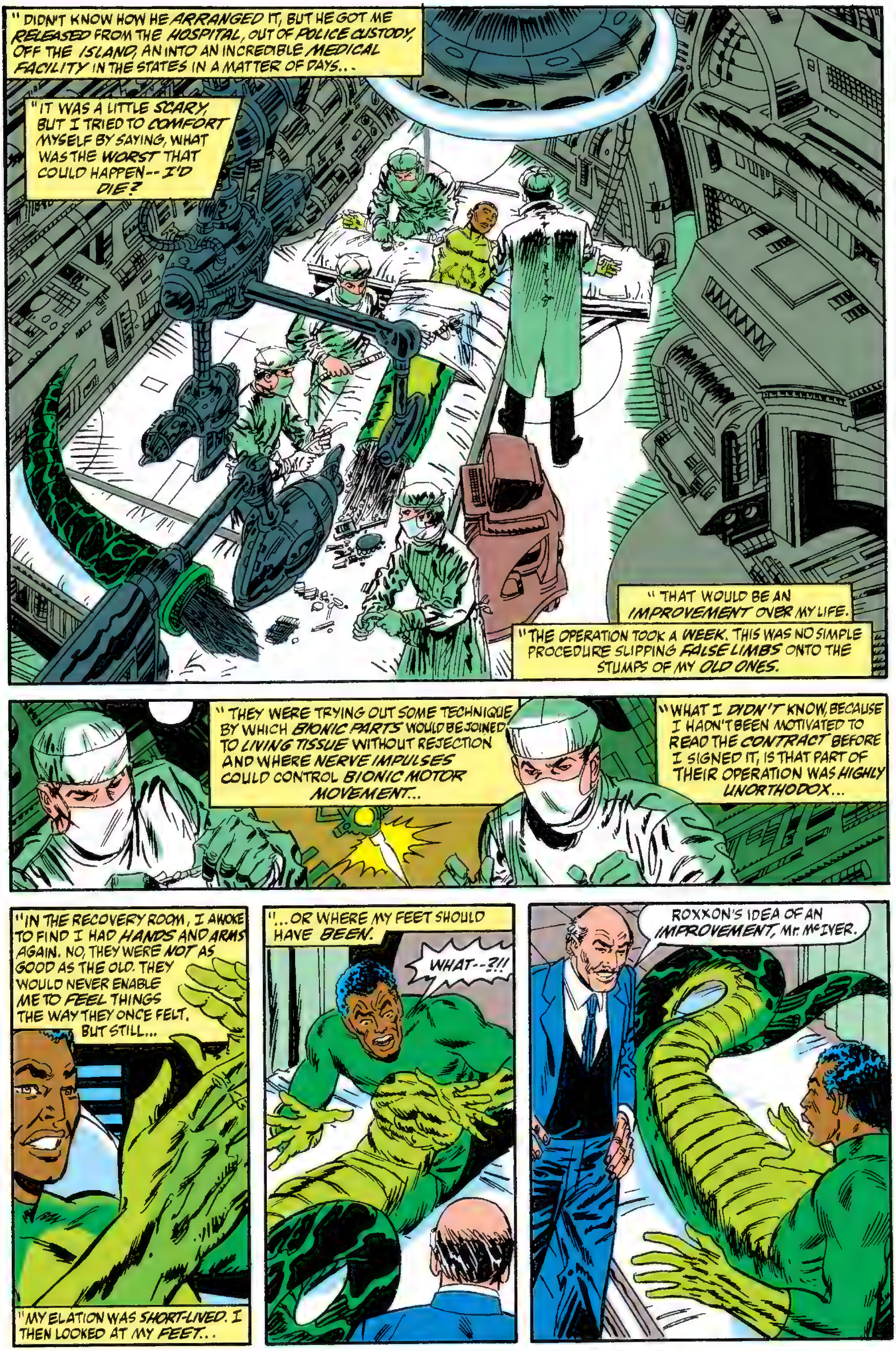

STAN LEE PRESENTS:
BUSHMASTER
BROTHERS
THE VAULT, HOME AWAY FROM HOME TO 135 SUPERHUMAN CONVICTS, INCLUDING QUINCY McIVER BETTER KNOWN AS BUSHMASTER...
ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, GUESS MY TRIAL'S NOT GOING TOO BADLY. MY LAWYER SEEMS TO THINK I'LL GET OFF WITH FIVE YEARS--ELIGIBLE FOR PAROLE IN LESS THAN TWO.
TWO YEARS... IN THE HEAVIEST SLAMMER IN THE COUNTRY, PROBABLY THE WORLD.
TIME ENOUGH TO MEMORIZE EVERY CRACK IN THE WALL... TO OBSESS OVER EVERY FLEETING THOUGHT... TO GO STIR CRAZY THINKING ABOUT THE MOCKERY OF A LIFE I HAVE TO LIVE...
MARK GRUENWALD...STORY
DON HECK.........PENCILS AND INKS
RICK PARKER......LETTERS
M.HANDS ...COLORS

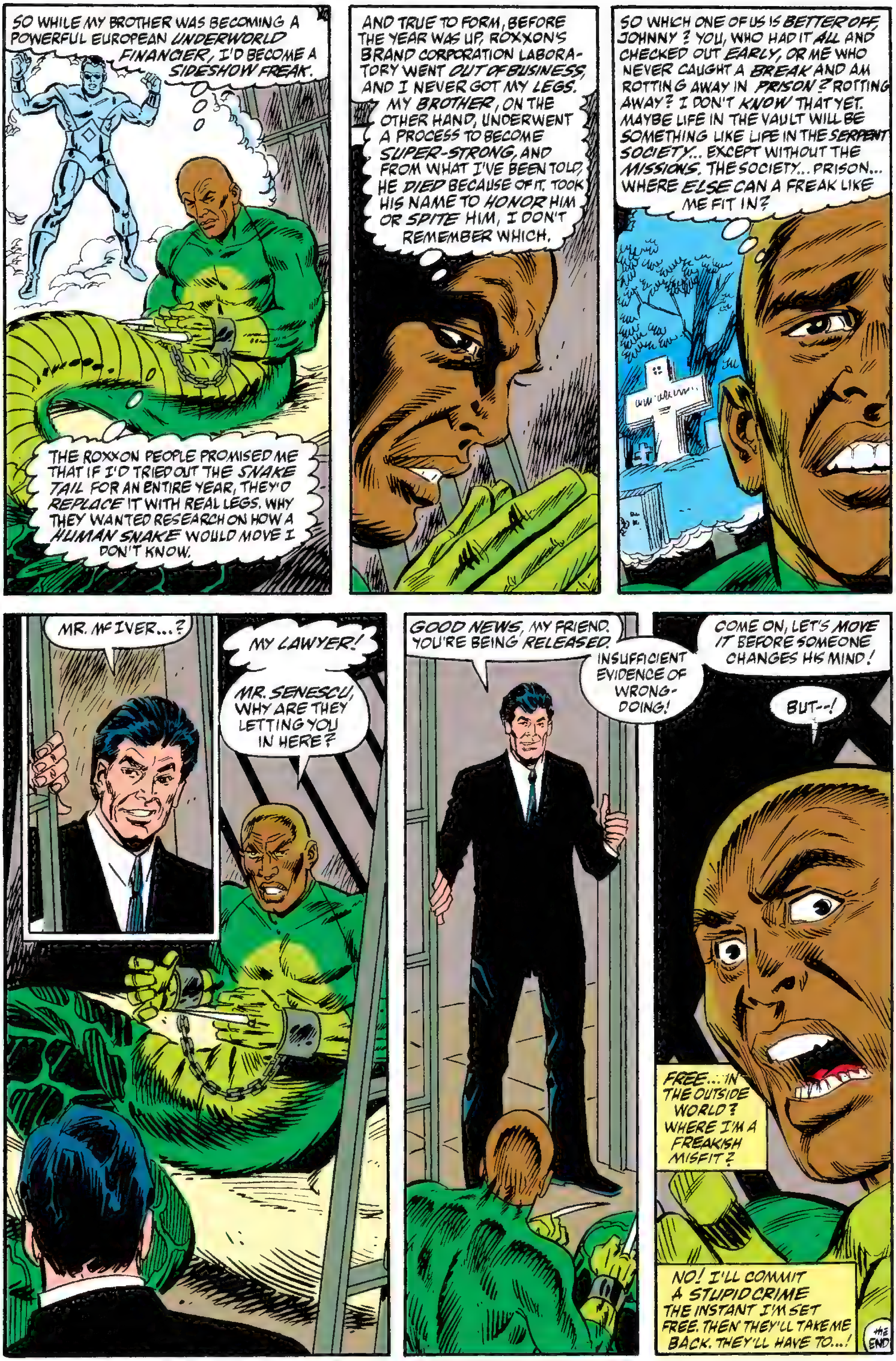

LIFE--HA! DID I EVER HAVE A CHANCE TO LEAD A REASONABLE LIFE...OR WAS I MEANT TO BECOME A LIMBLESS FREAK UNFIT FOR POLITE SOCIETY?
I NEVER LET MYSELF THINK ABOUT IT MUCH...DIDN'T WANT TO WALLOW IN SELF-PITY...
BUT HERE...WHAT DOES IT MATTER? IF I WANT TO WALLOW, I HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO DO SO!
"OH, MAN... MIND'S DRIFTING BACK. HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT THIS STUFF IN YEARS. WHERE DID I GO WRONG? WHERE...? REMEMBER WHEN I WAS TWELVE... BACK ON THE ISLAND. MAYBE IT STARTED THERE. ONE SUMMER NIGHT, MY BROTHER GOT THE BRIGHT IDEA TO SEE HOW MUCH FRUIT WE COULD STEAL. AT THAT TIME, BIG JOHN COULD DO NO WRONG AS FAR AS I WAS CONCERNED.
"I WENT ALONG FOR THE RIDE, AND THAT FAT OLD SHOPKEEPER WAS SHARPER THAN WE'D FIGURED...
COME BACK HERE, YOU THIEVIN' KIDS!
JOHN-- WAIT UP!
GOT YOU!
I DIN'T TAKE ANYTHING, MON--LOOK! I'VE GOT NOTHIN' IN ME HANDS! IT WAS MY BR--
WAPP
AN' IF I KITCH YOU OR YOUR BROTHER 'ROUND MY STAND AGAIN, I'LL WHACK THE BLACK RIGHT OFF YOUR BOTTOMS!
"BROTHER"? D-DID I TELL 'IM JOHN WAS ME BROTHER?
HEY, QUINCEY-WINCEY. WHAT HOPPEN YOU, MON?
I GOT CAUGHT... BEAT!
HEY! YOU SQUEAL ON ME, MON? YOU TELL 'IM WHO I WAS?
NO, JOHNNY-- NO! I SWEAR!
I FIND OUT YOU LYIN', YOU LITTLE GIMP--!
NO--!

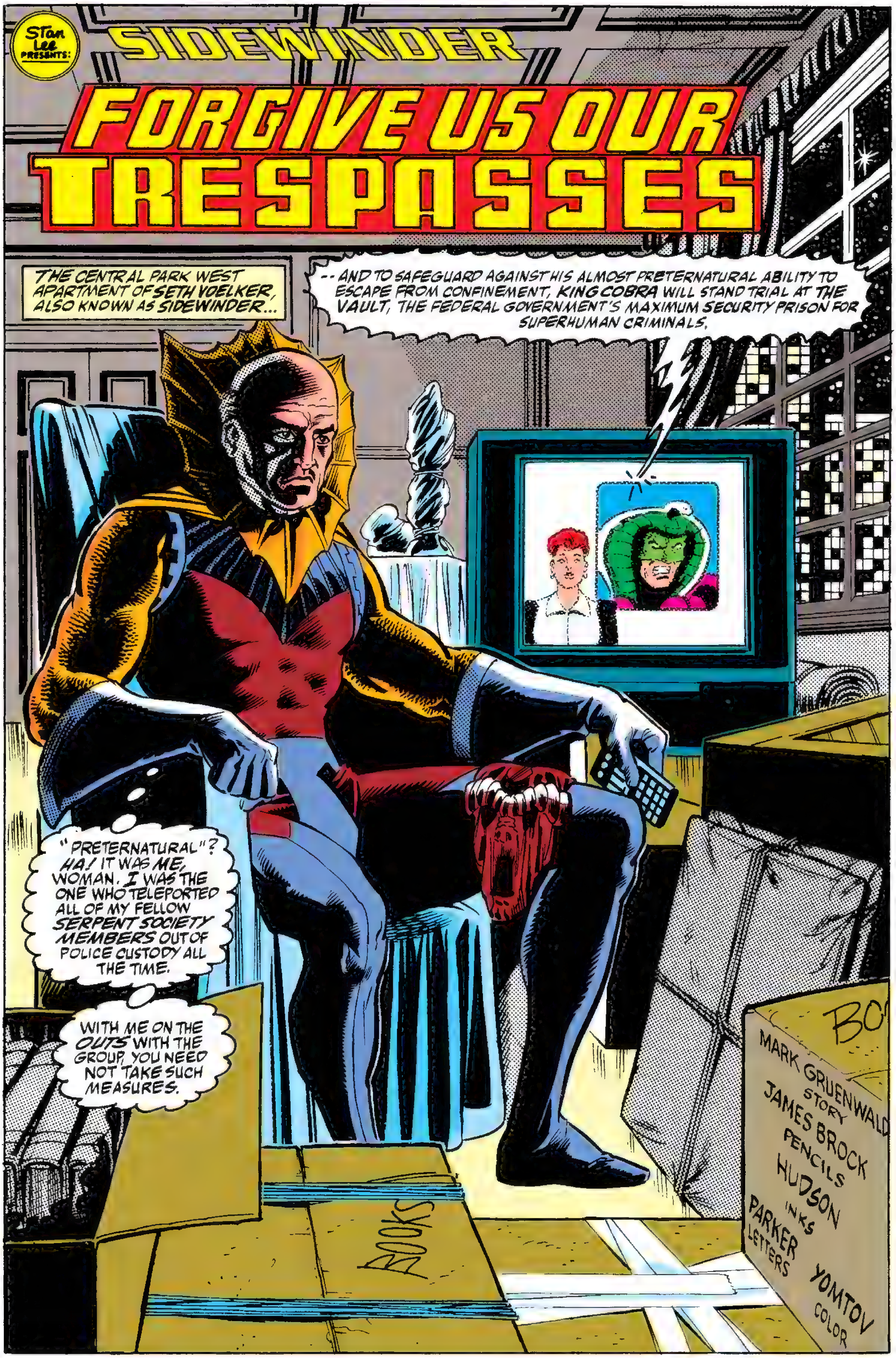

"JOHN DID FIND OUT. BEAT ME HARD. BUT THE BEATING HE GAVE THE SHOPKEEPER A FEW NIGHTS LATER... KILLED HIM.
"JOHN GOT AWAY WITH IT, THOUGH. HE WAS LIKE THAT. AND A FEW YEARS LATER HE FOUND HIMSELF ONE OF HERVE ARGOSY'S TOP MUSCLE-MEN IN HIS GUN EXPORTING BUSINESS...
SO I GOT THIS KID BROTHER WHO WANTS TO WORK FOR YOU, MR. ARGOSY.
HE A GOOD KID?
PRETTY GOOD.
SEE ANTOINE. HE'S GOT A JOB WE COULD TRY HIM OUT ON.
"I REMEMBER HOW JOHN BROKE THE GOOD NEWS TO ME...
GET THIS STRAIGHT, QUINCE.
YOU MUFF IT, MAKE ME LOOK BAD IN FRONT OF THE BOSS--
"I NEVER LET JOHN FINISH HIS THREATS.
I WON'T MON. I SWEAR!
SEE TO IT.
THANKS, JOHNNY!
"A FEW NIGHTS LATER, THERE I WAS...
"...UNLOADING COCAINE FROM A BANANA BOAT...
"IT WAS THE NIGHT ANY CHANCE I HAD AT A NORMAL LIFE ENDED.
HEY, MON-- THOSE LIGHTS-- WHAT--?
THIS IS THE POLICE! REMAIN WHERE YOU ARE AND PUT YOUR HANDS ON TOP OF YOUR HEADS!

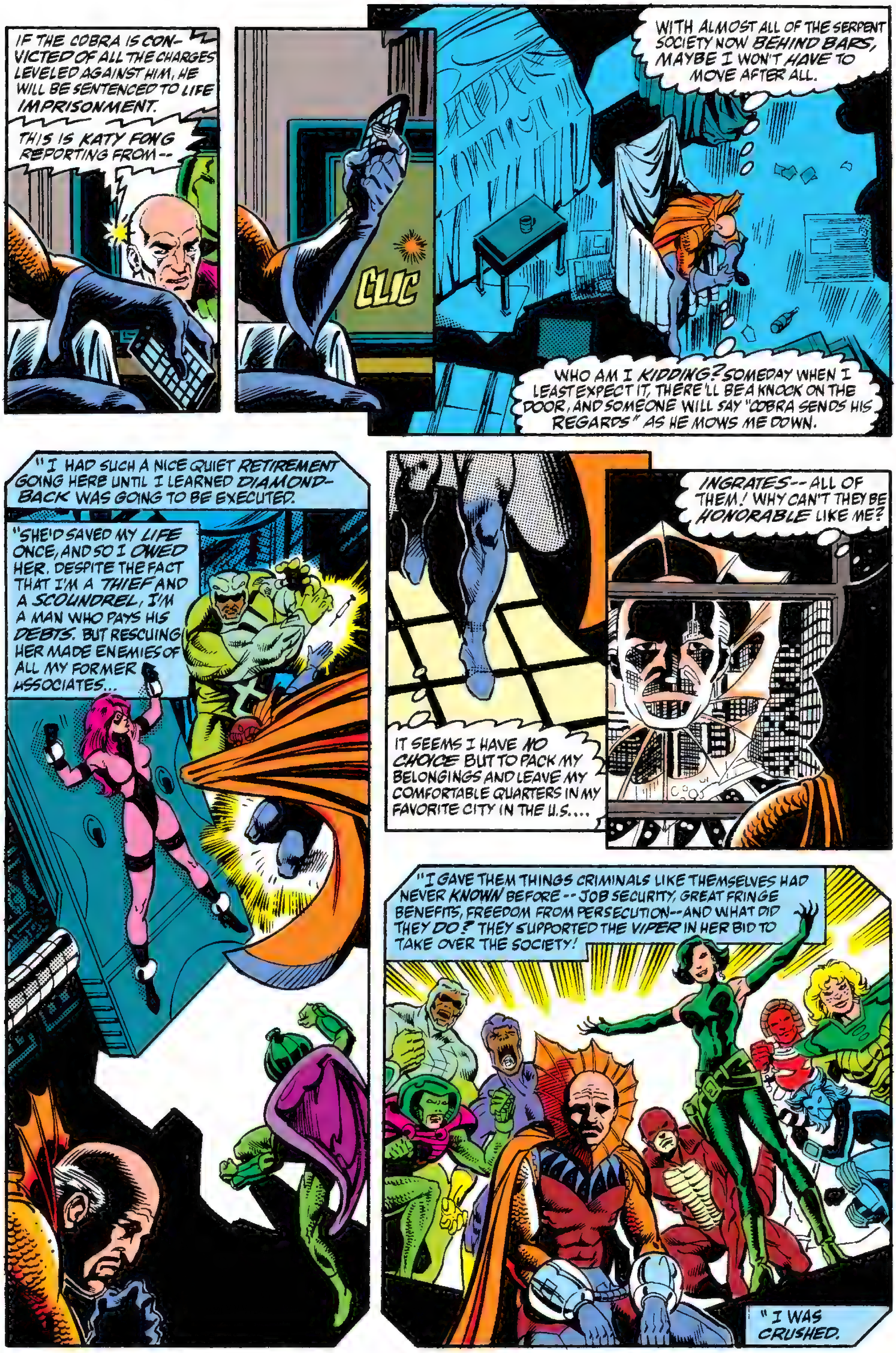

"IT WASN'T THAT I WAS SO FRIGHTENED OF THE *POLICE*. I WAS FRIGHTENED OF WHAT MY *BROTHER* WOULD DO TO ME WHEN HE LEARNED ABOUT *THE BUST*.
"WITHOUT THINKING, I BOLTED AND RAN TO THE *DOCK*--
"--AND *DOVE* INTO THE INKY-BLACK WATERS...
"I COULDN'T LET THEM *CATCH* ME. BETTER TO BE *DEAD* THAN BE *CAUGHT*, I THOUGHT.
"EVEN NOW, I CAN FEEL THE WAY MY *ARMS* FLAILED THROUGH THAT WATER... HOW MY *LEGS*, WEIGHTED DOWN BY MY SHOES, *KICKED* SO DESPERATELY...
"I TRIED TO *STAY DOWN*, GO AS FAR AS I COULD WITHOUT *COMING UP*. I GOT DIZZY, MY HEAD FELT LIKE IT WOULD *BURST*. I CLAMBERED TO THE SURFACE AND BEFORE I COULD CATCH MY *BREATH*, I SAW THE *POLICE BOAT* BEARING DOWN UPON ME.
"I REMEMBER *NOTHING* AFTER THAT.
"NOTHING TILL I WOKE UP IN THE *HOSPITAL*, AND HAD AN *ITCH* ON MY FOREHEAD THAT I COULDN'T SCRATCH...
"...BECAUSE MY *ARMS* WERE *GONE*!
"AND I HAD THIS PRICKLY *TINGLING SENSATION* IN MY LOWER LEGS... PARTS OF MY BODY THAT AT THAT TIME WERE IN *MEDICAL WASTE BAGS* IN THE BASEMENT...
"IT WAS *JOHN* WHO TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED...
--*PROPELLERS* CHEWED YOU UP AND SPAT YOU OUT, QUINCE. NO ONE CAN FIGURE HOW YOU MANAGED TO STICK *ALL FOUR* OF YOUR LIMBS INTO IT.
REALLY, MON, *ONE* WOULD'VE BEEN PLENTY.
YOU ARE LUCKY TO BE *ALIVE*, LITTLE BRO.

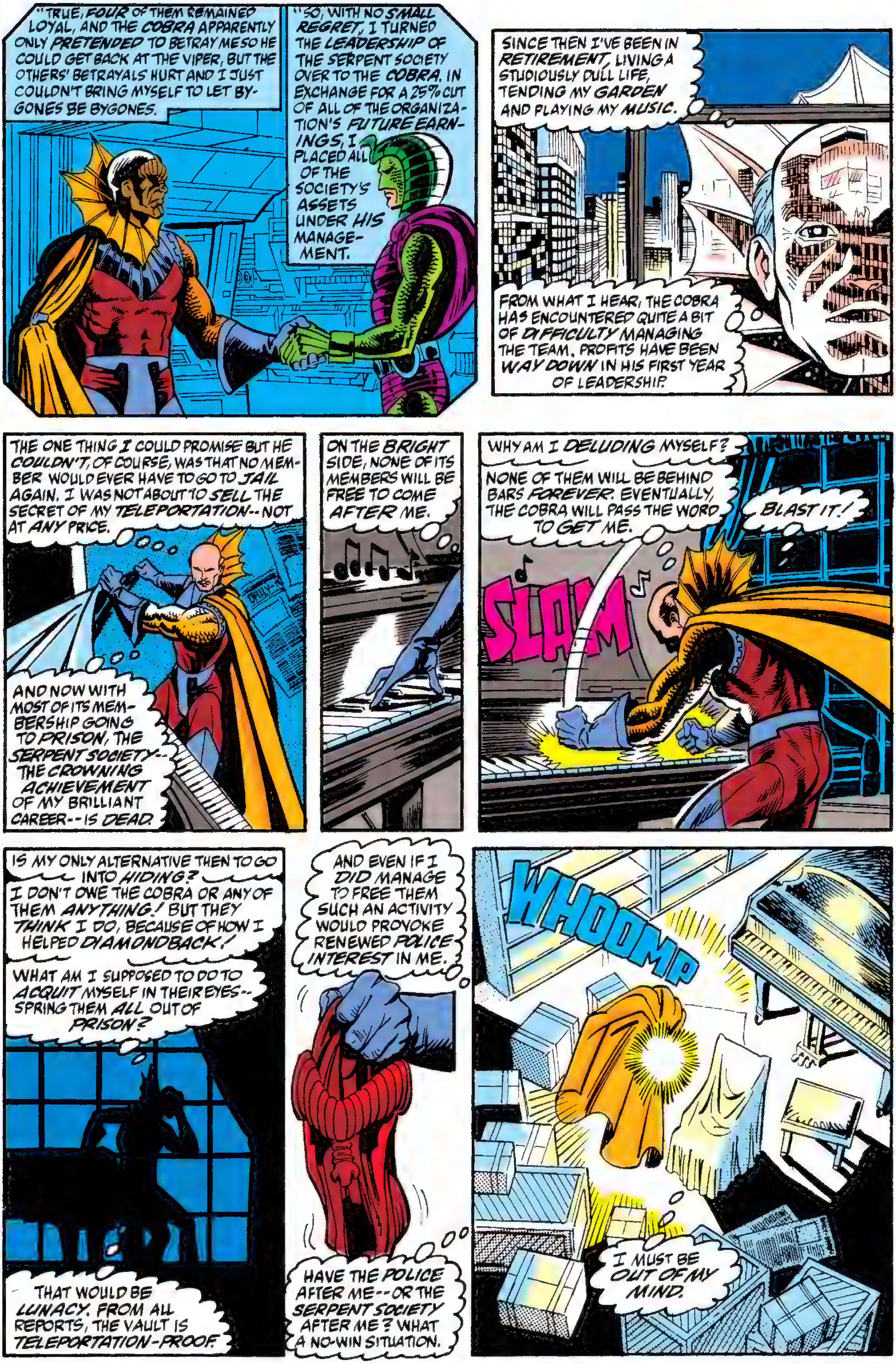

YOU WON'T BE SEEING MUCH OF ME ANYMORE, QUINCE. ARGOSY'S SENDIN' ME TO EUROPE TO RUN SOME OF HIS TRADE.
COOL, HUH?
ANOTHER THING. I'M NOT JOHN McIVER ANYMORE. I'M CALLING MYSELF JOHN BUSHMASTER. ONE OF MY LADYFRIENDS THOUGHT OF IT. A NEW NAME FOR MY NEW LIFE.
YOU REMEMBER THAT, HEAR?
WELL, YOU TAKE CARE NOW, QUINCE. I'LL UNDERSTAND IF YOU DON'T WRITE.
"I LAY THERE, WATCHING HIM STROLL OUT, LIKE THE COCK OF THE ROOST. IT WAS THE LAST TIME I'D EVER SEE HIM.
"THE NUMBNESS THAT ENVELOPED ME SLOWLY BUILT INTO IMPOTENT RAGE.
"IT JUST WASN'T FAIR, I SCREAMED INSIDE. I WAS ALWAYS GETTING CAUGHT, HE WAS ALWAYS GETTING AWAY. I HATED HIM FOR WALKING OUT ON ME IN MY TIME OF GREATEST NEED.
"I HATED MYSELF FOR NOT BEING HIM.
"I HATED LIFE ITSELF, BUT I LACKED ANY MEANS TO END IT.
"MAYBE A WEEK OR A MONTH LATER, I GOT A VISITOR. A WHITE MAN, AN AMERICAN, AN EXECUTIVE OF THE ROXXON OIL COMPANY...
"SAID HIS NAME WAS SETH VOELKER...
--AN EXPERIMENT IN PROSTHETICS. ARTIFICIAL LIMBS.
MY RESEARCH GROUP KEEPS ABREAST OF ACCIDENT REPORTS AND NOTICED YOUR CASE.
INTERESTED, MR. McIVER? THE PROSTHETIC DEVICES WOULD BE YOURS TO USE AND KEEP.
"OF COURSE I WAS INTERESTED. I WANTED MY ARMS AND LEGS BACK. WITHOUT THEM, HOW COULD I SLIT MY THROAT OR JUMP OFF A BUILDING?
BUT I'M UNDER ARREST, SIR. I'M SUPPOSED TO--
YOU LET ROXXON WORRY ABOUT THE POLICE, SON.

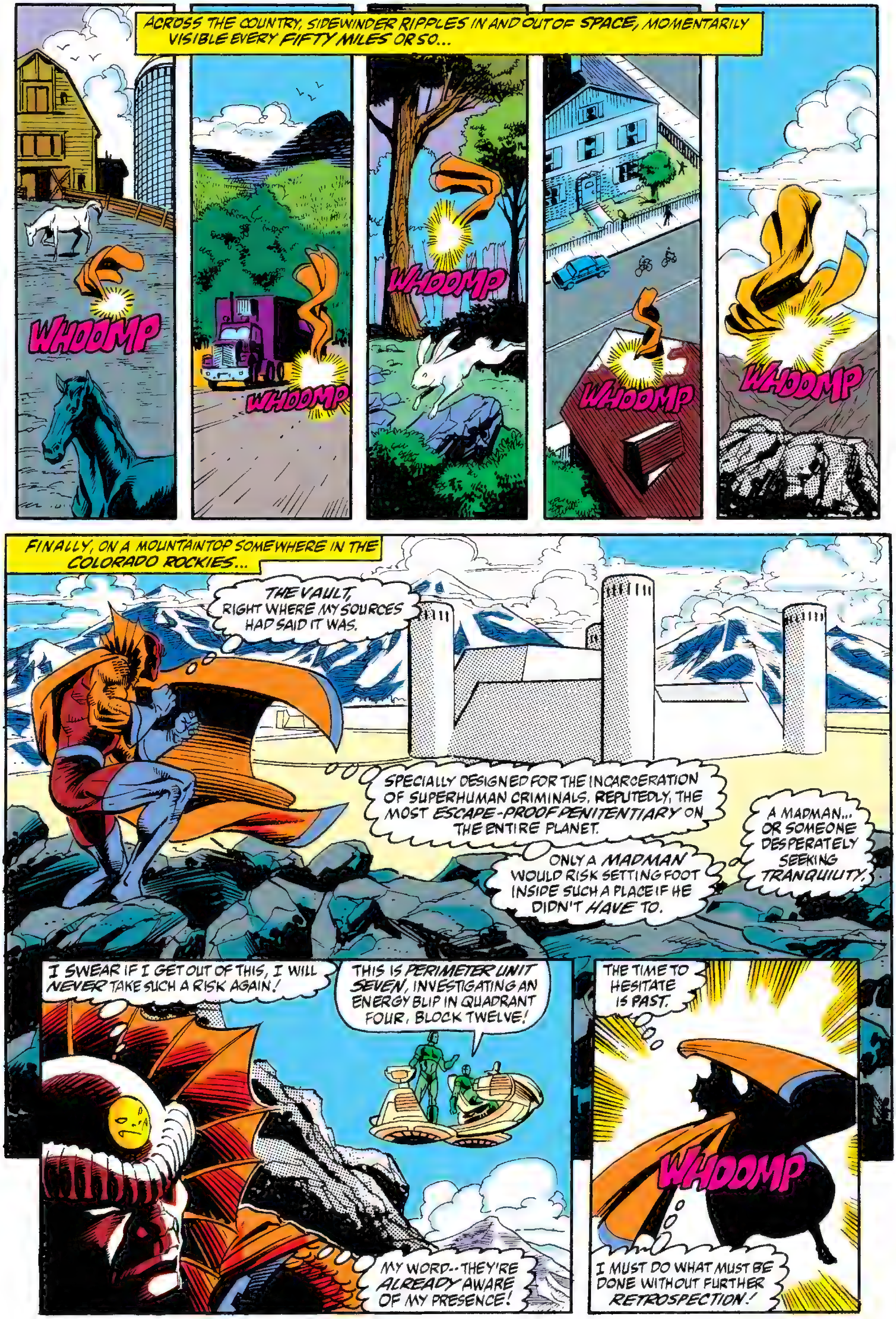

"DIDN'T KNOW HOW HE ARRANGED IT, BUT HE GOT ME RELEASED FROM THE HOSPITAL, OUT OF POLICE CUSTODY, OFF THE ISLAND, AN INTO AN INCREDIBLE MEDICAL FACILITY IN THE STATES IN A MATTER OF DAYS...
"IT WAS A LITTLE SCARY, BUT I TRIED TO COMFORT MYSELF BY SAYING, WHAT WAS THE WORST THAT COULD HAPPEN--I'D DIE?
"THAT WOULD BE AN IMPROVEMENT OVER MY LIFE.
"THE OPERATION TOOK A WEEK. THIS WAS NO SIMPLE PROCEDURE SLIPPING FALSE LIMBS ONTO THE STUMPS OF MY OLD ONES.
"THEY WERE TRYING OUT SOME TECHNIQUE BY WHICH BIONIC PARTS WOULD BE JOINED TO LIVING TISSUE WITHOUT REJECTION AND WHERE NERVE IMPULSES COULD CONTROL BIONIC MOTOR MOVEMENT...
"WHAT I DIDN'T KNOW, BECAUSE I HADN'T BEEN MOTIVATED TO READ THE CONTRACT BEFORE I SIGNED IT, IS THAT PART OF THEIR OPERATION WAS HIGHLY UNORTHODOX...
"IN THE RECOVERY ROOM, I AWOKE TO FIND I HAD HANDS AND ARMS AGAIN. NO, THEY WERE NOT AS GOOD AS THE OLD. THEY WOULD NEVER ENABLE ME TO FEEL THINGS THE WAY THEY ONCE FELT. BUT STILL...
"MY ELATION WAS SHORT-LIVED. I THEN LOOKED AT MY FEET...
"...OR WHERE MY FEET SHOULD HAVE BEEN.
WHAT--?!!
ROXXON'S IDEA OF AN IMPROVEMENT, Mr. McIVER.

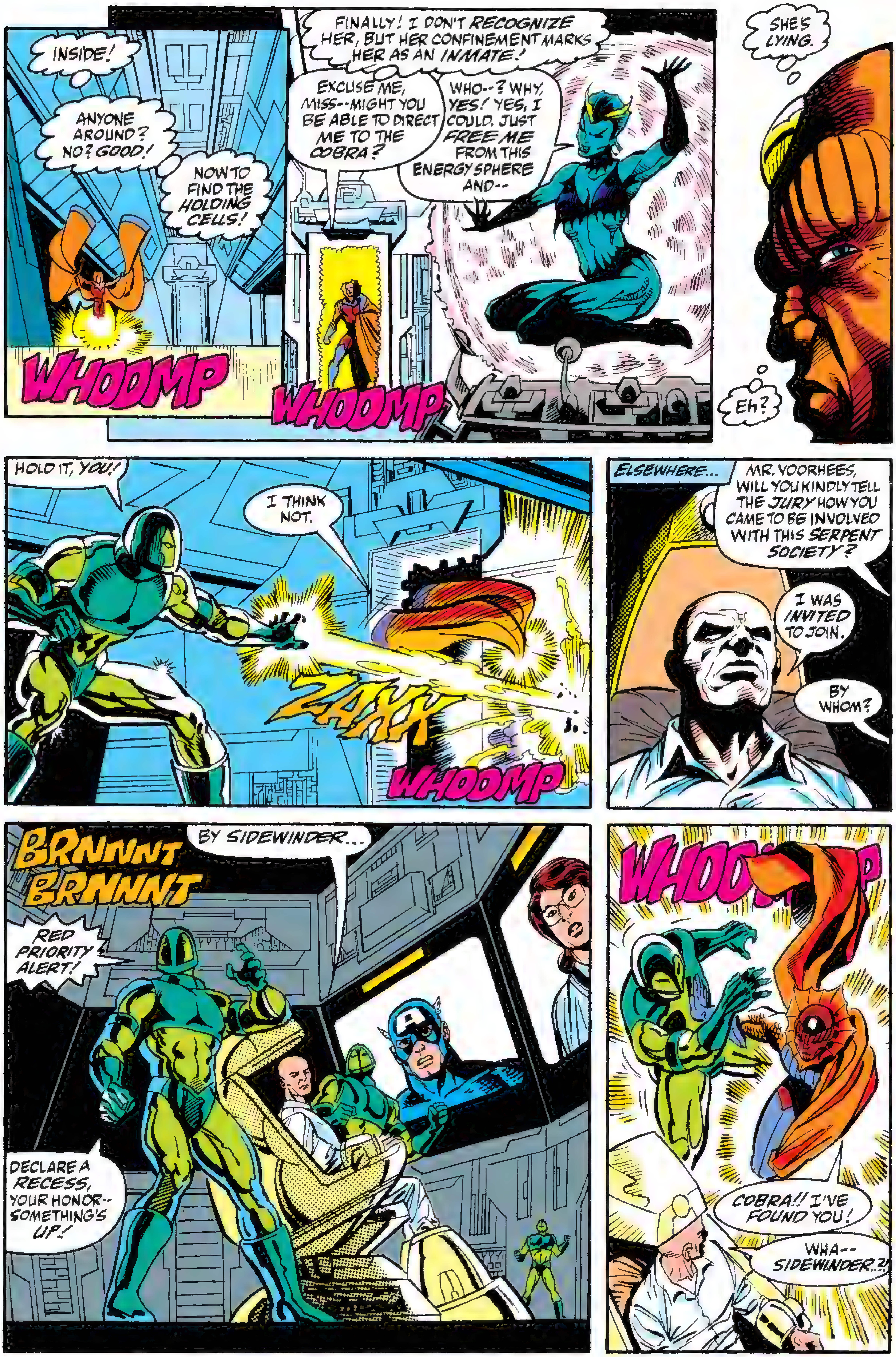

SO WHILE MY BROTHER WAS BECOMING A POWERFUL EUROPEAN *UNDERWORLD FINANCIER*, I'D BECOME A *SIDESHOW FREAK*.
THE ROXXON PEOPLE PROMISED ME THAT IF I'D TRIED OUT THE *SNAKE TAIL* FOR AN ENTIRE YEAR, THEY'D *REPLACE* IT WITH REAL LEGS. WHY THEY WANTED RESEARCH ON HOW A *HUMAN SNAKE* WOULD MOVE I DON'T KNOW.
AND TRUE TO FORM, BEFORE THE YEAR WAS UP, ROXXON'S BRAND CORPORATION LABORATORY WENT *OUT OF BUSINESS*, AND I NEVER GOT MY *LEGS*.
MY *BROTHER*, ON THE OTHER HAND, UNDERWENT A PROCESS TO BECOME *SUPER-STRONG*, AND FROM WHAT I'VE BEEN TOLD, HE *DIED* BECAUSE OF IT. TOOK HIS NAME TO *HONOR* HIM OR *SPITE* HIM, I DON'T REMEMBER WHICH.
SO WHICH ONE OF US IS *BETTER OFF*, JOHNNY? YOU, WHO HAD IT *ALL* AND CHECKED OUT *EARLY*, OR ME WHO NEVER CAUGHT A *BREAK* AND AM ROTTING AWAY IN *PRISON*? ROTTING AWAY? I DON'T *KNOW* THAT YET. MAYBE LIFE IN THE VAULT WILL BE SOMETHING LIKE LIFE IN THE *SERPENT SOCIETY*... EXCEPT WITHOUT THE *MISSIONS*. THE SOCIETY... PRISON... WHERE *ELSE* CAN A FREAK LIKE ME FIT IN?
MR. McIVER...?
MY *LAWYER*!
MR. SENESCU, WHY ARE THEY LETTING YOU IN HERE?
GOOD NEWS, MY FRIEND. YOU'RE BEING *RELEASED*.
INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE OF WRONG-DOING!
COME ON, LET'S *MOVE IT* BEFORE SOMEONE CHANGES HIS MIND!
BUT--!
FREE... IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD? WHERE I'M A FREAKISH MISFIT?
NO! I'LL COMMIT A STUPID CRIME THE INSTANT I'M SET FREE. THEN THEY'LL TAKE ME BACK. THEY'LL HAVE TO...!
THE END

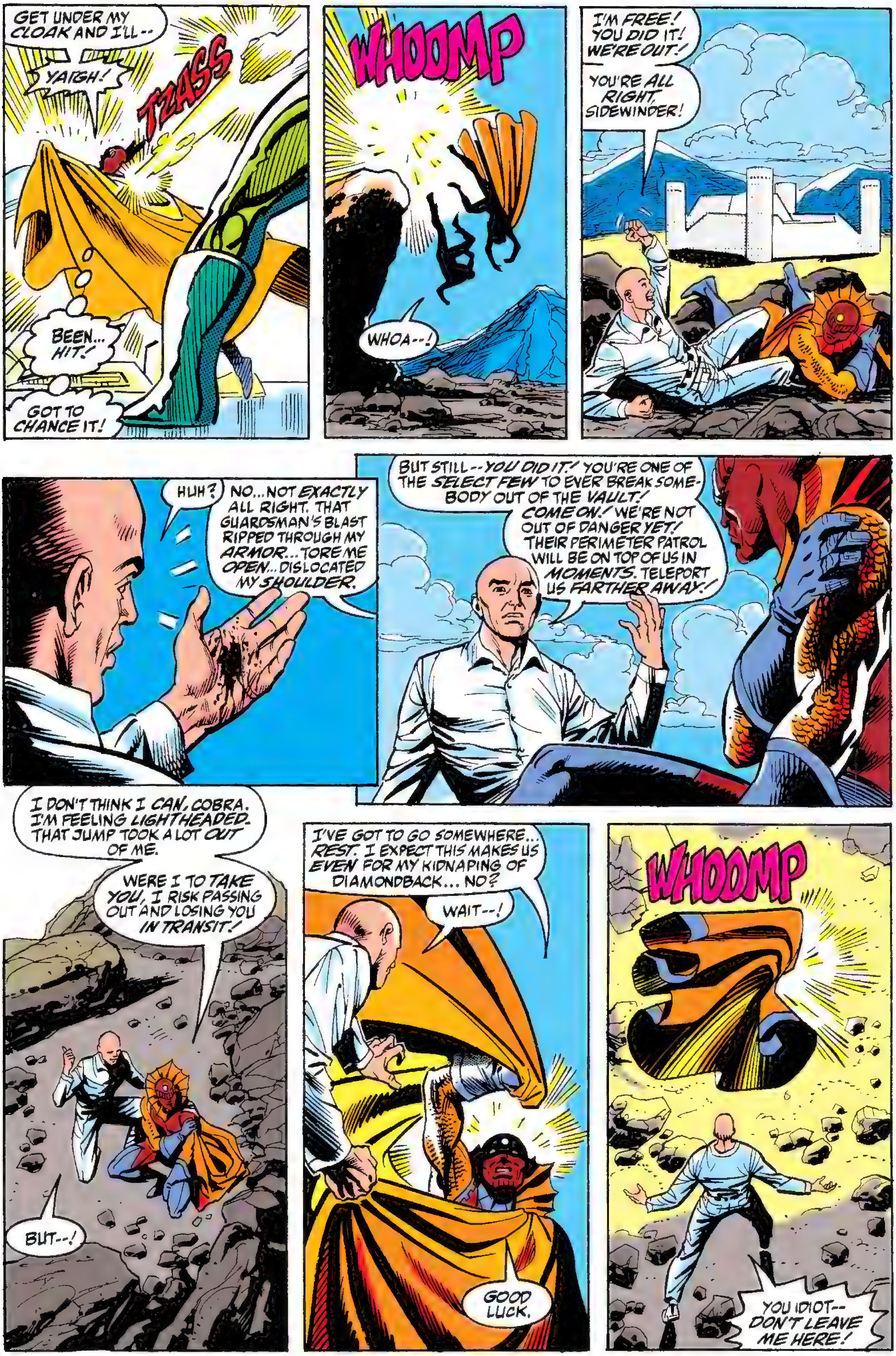

Stan Lee PRESENTS:
SIDEWINDER
FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES
THE CENTRAL PARK WEST APARTMENT OF SETH VOELKER, ALSO KNOWN AS SIDEWINDER...
--AND TO SAFEGUARD AGAINST HIS ALMOST PRETERNATURAL ABILITY TO ESCAPE FROM CONFINEMENT, KING COBRA WILL STAND TRIAL AT THE VAULT, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON FOR SUPERHUMAN CRIMINALS.
"PRETERNATURAL"? HA! IT WAS ME, WOMAN. I WAS THE ONE WHO TELEPORTED ALL OF MY FELLOW SERPENT SOCIETY MEMBERS OUT OF POLICE CUSTODY ALL THE TIME.
WITH ME ON THE OUTS WITH THE GROUP, YOU NEED NOT TAKE SUCH MEASURES.
BOOKS
BO
MARK GRUENWALD STORY
JAMES BROCK PENCILS
HUDSON INKS
PARKER LETTERS
YOMTOV COLOR

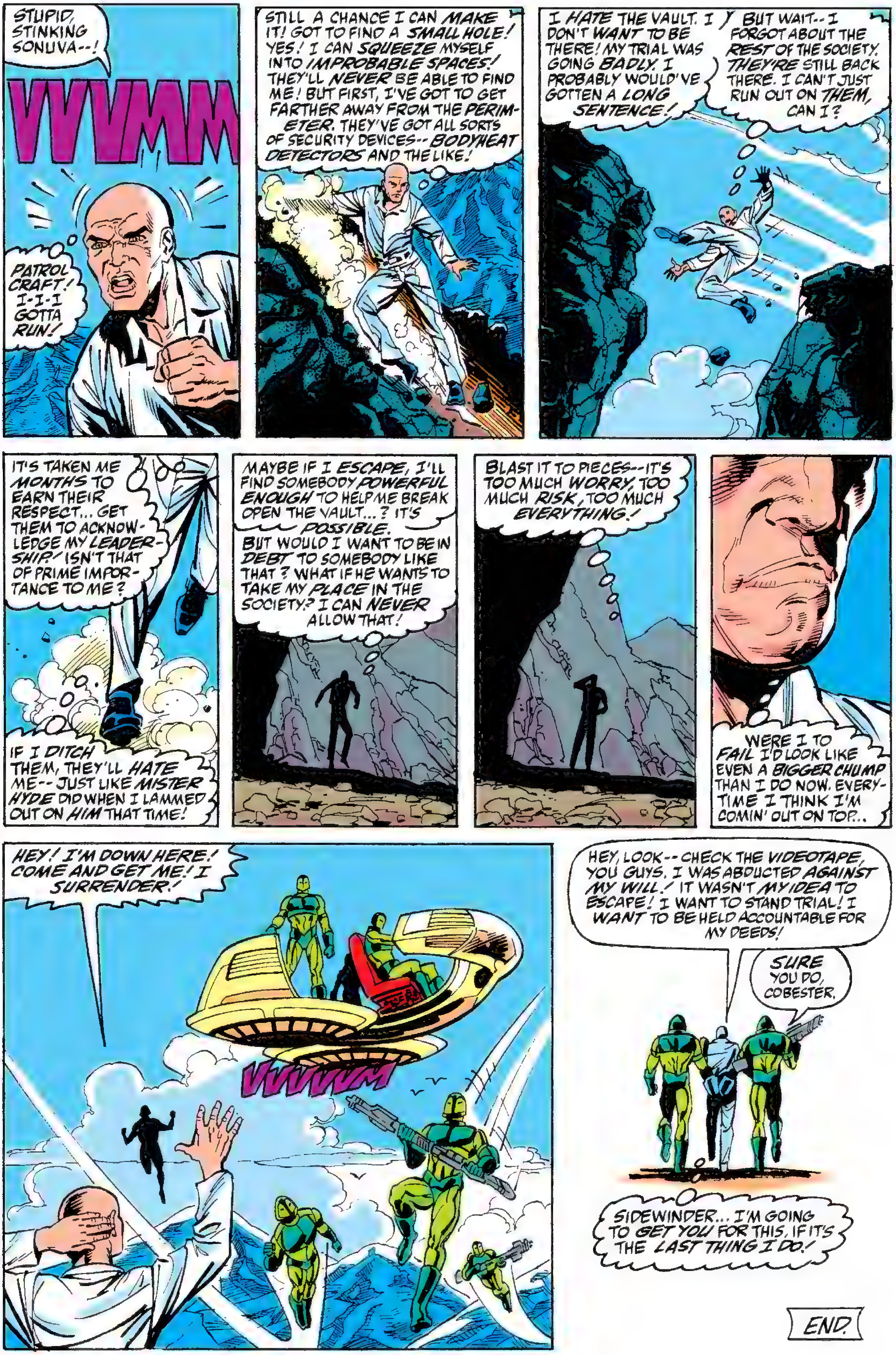

IF THE COBRA IS CONVICTED OF ALL THE CHARGES LEVELED AGAINST HIM, HE WILL BE SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT.
THIS IS KATY FONG REPORTING FROM--
CLIC
WITH ALMOST ALL OF THE SERPENT SOCIETY NOW BEHIND BARS, MAYBE I WON'T HAVE TO MOVE AFTER ALL.
WHO AM I KIDDING? SOMEDAY WHEN I LEAST EXPECT IT, THERE'LL BE A KNOCK ON THE DOOR, AND SOMEONE WILL SAY "COBRA SENDS HIS REGARDS" AS HE MOWS ME DOWN.
"I HAD SUCH A NICE QUIET RETIREMENT GOING HERE UNTIL I LEARNED DIAMONDBACK WAS GOING TO BE EXECUTED.
"SHE'D SAVED MY LIFE ONCE, AND SO I OWED HER. DESPITE THE FACT THAT I'M A THIEF AND A SCOUNDREL, I'M A MAN WHO PAYS HIS DEBTS. BUT RESCUING HER MADE ENEMIES OF ALL MY FORMER ASSOCIATES...
IT SEEMS I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO PACK MY BELONGINGS AND LEAVE MY COMFORTABLE QUARTERS IN MY FAVORITE CITY IN THE U.S....
INGRATES-- ALL OF THEM! WHY CAN'T THEY BE HONORABLE LIKE ME?
"I GAVE THEM THINGS CRIMINALS LIKE THEMSELVES HAD NEVER KNOWN BEFORE -- JOB SECURITY, GREAT FRINGE BENEFITS, FREEDOM FROM PERSECUTION--AND WHAT DID THEY DO? THEY SUPPORTED THE VIPER IN HER BID TO TAKE OVER THE SOCIETY!
"I WAS CRUSHED.

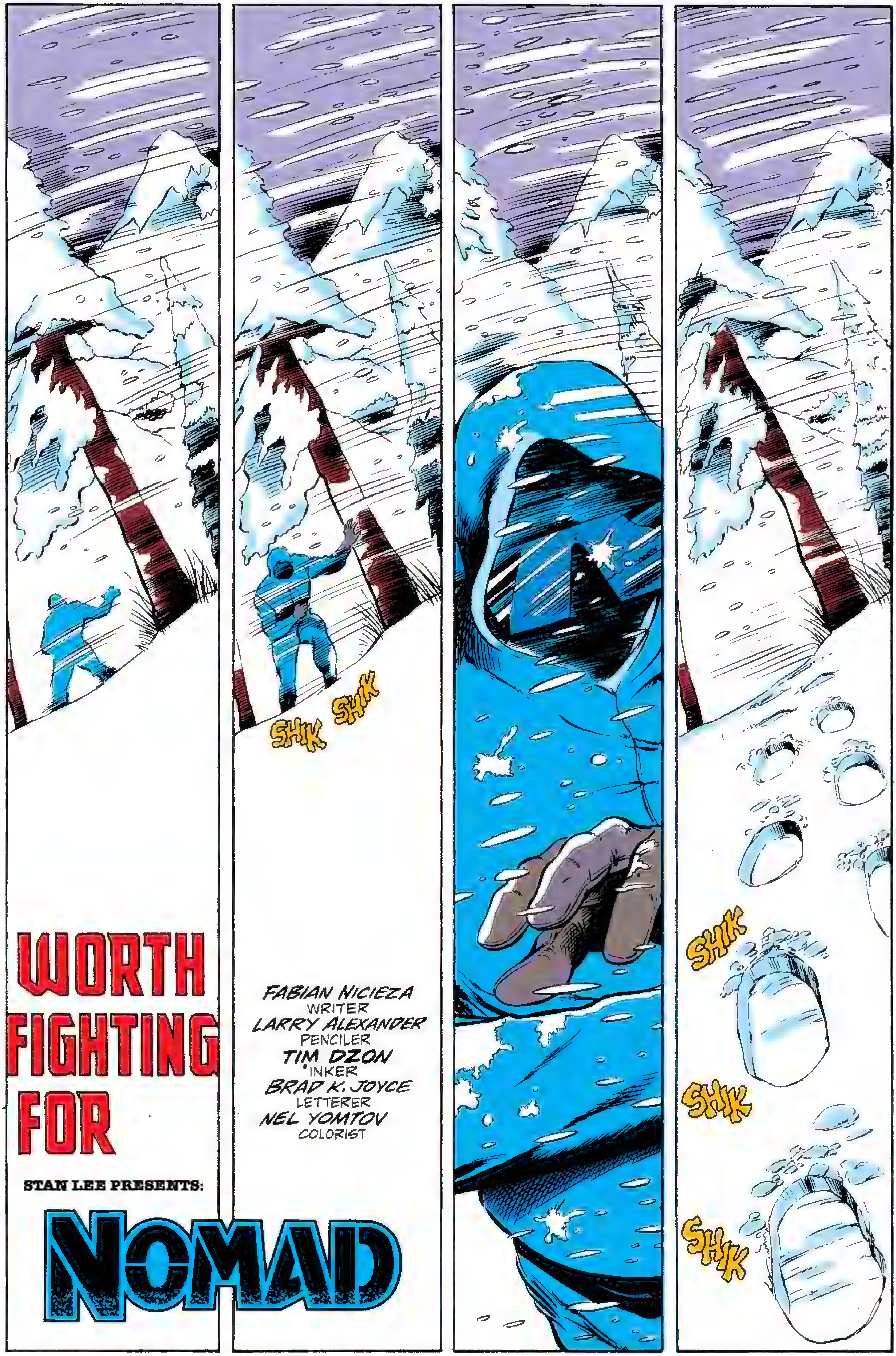

"TRUE, FOUR OF THEM REMAINED LOYAL, AND THE COBRA APPARENTLY ONLY PRETENDED TO BETRAY ME SO HE COULD GET BACK AT THE VIPER, BUT THE OTHERS' BETRAYALS HURT AND I JUST COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO LET BYGONES BE BYGONES.
"SO, WITH NO SMALL REGRET, I TURNED THE LEADERSHIP OF THE SERPENT SOCIETY OVER TO THE COBRA. IN EXCHANGE FOR A 25% CUT OF ALL OF THE ORGANIZATION'S FUTURE EARNINGS, I PLACED ALL OF THE SOCIETY'S ASSETS UNDER HIS MANAGEMENT.
SINCE THEN I'VE BEEN IN RETIREMENT, LIVING A STUDIOUSLY DULL LIFE, TENDING MY GARDEN AND PLAYING MY MUSIC.
FROM WHAT I HEAR, THE COBRA HAS ENCOUNTERED QUITE A BIT OF DIFFICULTY MANAGING THE TEAM. PROFITS HAVE BEEN WAY DOWN IN HIS FIRST YEAR OF LEADERSHIP.
THE ONE THING I COULD PROMISE BUT HE COULDN'T, OF COURSE, WAS THAT NO MEMBER WOULD EVER HAVE TO GO TO JAIL AGAIN. I WAS NOT ABOUT TO SELL THE SECRET OF MY TELEPORTATION--NOT AT ANY PRICE.
AND NOW WITH MOST OF ITS MEMBERSHIP GOING TO PRISON, THE SERPENT SOCIETY--THE CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT OF MY BRILLIANT CAREER--IS DEAD.
ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, NONE OF ITS MEMBERS WILL BE FREE TO COME AFTER ME.
WHY AM I DELUDING MYSELF?
NONE OF THEM WILL BE BEHIND BARS FOREVER. EVENTUALLY, THE COBRA WILL PASS THE WORD TO GET ME.
SLAM
BLAST IT!
IS MY ONLY ALTERNATIVE THEN TO GO INTO HIDING? I DON'T OWE THE COBRA OR ANY OF THEM ANYTHING! BUT THEY THINK I DO, BECAUSE OF HOW I HELPED DIAMONDBACK!
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO TO ACQUIT MYSELF IN THEIR EYES--SPRING THEM ALL OUT OF PRISON?
THAT WOULD BE LUNACY. FROM ALL REPORTS, THE VAULT IS TELEPORTATION-PROOF.
AND EVEN IF I DID MANAGE TO FREE THEM SUCH AN ACTIVITY WOULD PROVOKE RENEWED POLICE INTEREST IN ME.
HAVE THE POLICE AFTER ME--OR THE SERPENT SOCIETY AFTER ME? WHAT A NO-WIN SITUATION.
WHOOMP
I MUST BE OUT OF MY MIND.


ACROSS THE COUNTRY, SIDEWINDER RIPPLES IN AND OUT OF SPACE, MOMENTARILY VISIBLE EVERY FIFTY MILES OR SO...
WHOOMP
WHOOMP
WHOOMP
WHOOMP
WHOOMP
FINALLY, ON A MOUNTAINTOP SOMEWHERE IN THE COLORADO ROCKIES...
THE VAULT, RIGHT WHERE MY SOURCES HAD SAID IT WAS.
SPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR THE INCARCERATION OF SUPERHUMAN CRIMINALS. REPUTEDLY, THE MOST ESCAPE-PROOF PENITENTIARY ON THE ENTIRE PLANET.
ONLY A MADMAN WOULD RISK SETTING FOOT INSIDE SUCH A PLACE IF HE DIDN'T HAVE TO.
A MADMAN... OR SOMEONE DESPERATELY SEEKING TRANQUILITY.
I SWEAR IF I GET OUT OF THIS, I WILL NEVER TAKE SUCH A RISK AGAIN!
THIS IS PERIMETER UNIT SEVEN, INVESTIGATING AN ENERGY BLIP IN QUADRANT FOUR, BLOCK TWELVE!
MY WORD-- THEY'RE ALREADY AWARE OF MY PRESENCE!
THE TIME TO HESITATE IS PAST.
WHOOMP
I MUST DO WHAT MUST BE DONE WITHOUT FURTHER RETROSPECTION!


INSIDE!
ANYONE AROUND? NO? GOOD!
NOW TO FIND THE HOLDING CELLS!
WHOOMP
WHOOMP
FINALLY! I DON'T RECOGNIZE HER, BUT HER CONFINEMENT MARKS HER AS AN INMATE!
EXCUSE ME, MISS--MIGHT YOU BE ABLE TO DIRECT ME TO THE COBRA?
WHO--? WHY, YES! YES, I COULD. JUST FREE ME FROM THIS ENERGY SPHERE AND--
SHE'S LYING.
Eh?
HOLD IT, YOU!
I THINK NOT.
ZAKK
WHOOMP
ELSEWHERE...
MR. VOORHEES, WILL YOU KINDLY TELL THE JURY HOW YOU CAME TO BE INVOLVED WITH THIS SERPENT SOCIETY?
I WAS INVITED TO JOIN.
BY WHOM?
BRNNNT BRNNNT
BY SIDEWINDER...
RED PRIORITY ALERT!
DECLARE A RECESS, YOUR HONOR-- SOMETHING'S UP!
WHOOMP
COBRA!! I'VE FOUND YOU!
WHA-- SIDEWINDER?!


GET UNDER MY CLOAK AND I'LL--
YAIGH!
TZASS
BEEN... HIT!
GOT TO CHANCE IT!
WHOOMP
WHOA--!
I'M FREE! YOU DID IT! WE'RE OUT!
YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, SIDEWINDER!
HUH?
NO...NOT EXACTLY ALL RIGHT. THAT GUARDSMAN'S BLAST RIPPED THROUGH MY ARMOR...TORE ME OPEN...DISLOCATED MY SHOULDER.
BUT STILL--YOU DID IT! YOU'RE ONE OF THE SELECT FEW TO EVER BREAK SOMEBODY OUT OF THE VAULT! COME ON! WE'RE NOT OUT OF DANGER YET! THEIR PERIMETER PATROL WILL BE ON TOP OF US IN MOMENTS. TELEPORT US FARTHER AWAY!
I DON'T THINK I CAN, COBRA. I'M FEELING LIGHTHEADED. THAT JUMP TOOK A LOT OUT OF ME.
WERE I TO TAKE YOU, I RISK PASSING OUT AND LOSING YOU IN TRANSIT!
BUT--!
I'VE GOT TO GO SOMEWHERE... REST. I EXPECT THIS MAKES US EVEN FOR MY KIDNAPING OF DIAMONDBACK... NO?
WAIT--!
GOOD LUCK.
WHOOMP
YOU IDIOT-- DON'T LEAVE ME HERE!


STUPID, STINKING SONUVA--!
VVVMM
PATROL CRAFT! I-I-I GOTTA RUN!
STILL A CHANCE I CAN *MAKE* IT! GOT TO FIND A *SMALL HOLE!* YES! I CAN *SQUEEZE* MYSELF INTO *IMPROBABLE SPACES!* THEY'LL *NEVER* BE ABLE TO FIND ME! BUT FIRST, I'VE GOT TO GET FARTHER AWAY FROM THE *PERIMETER.* THEY'VE GOT ALL SORTS OF SECURITY DEVICES--*BODYHEAT DETECTORS* AND THE LIKE!
I *HATE* THE VAULT. I DON'T *WANT* TO BE THERE! MY TRIAL WAS GOING *BADLY.* I PROBABLY WOULD'VE GOTTEN A *LONG SENTENCE!*
BUT WAIT--I FORGOT ABOUT THE *REST* OF THE SOCIETY. *THEY'RE* STILL BACK THERE. I CAN'T JUST RUN OUT ON *THEM,* CAN I?
IT'S TAKEN ME *MONTHS* TO EARN THEIR RESPECT... GET THEM TO ACKNOWLEDGE MY *LEADERSHIP!* ISN'T THAT OF PRIME IMPORTANCE TO ME?
IF I *DITCH* THEM, THEY'LL *HATE* ME--JUST LIKE *MISTER HYDE* DID WHEN I LAMMED OUT ON *HIM* THAT TIME!
MAYBE IF I *ESCAPE,* I'LL FIND SOMEBODY *POWERFUL ENOUGH* TO HELP ME BREAK OPEN THE VAULT...? IT'S *POSSIBLE.* BUT WOULD I WANT TO BE IN *DEBT* TO SOMEBODY LIKE THAT? WHAT IF HE WANTS TO TAKE MY *PLACE* IN THE SOCIETY? I CAN *NEVER* ALLOW THAT!
BLAST IT TO PIECES--IT'S TOO MUCH *WORRY,* TOO MUCH *RISK,* TOO MUCH *EVERYTHING!*
WERE I TO *FAIL* I'D LOOK LIKE EVEN A *BIGGER CHUMP* THAN I DO NOW. EVERYTIME I THINK I'M COMIN' OUT ON TOP...
HEY! I'M DOWN HERE! COME AND GET ME! I SURRENDER!
VVVVVM
HEY, LOOK--CHECK THE *VIDEOTAPE,* YOU GUYS. I WAS ABDUCTED *AGAINST MY WILL!* IT WASN'T *MY IDEA* TO *ESCAPE!* I WANT TO STAND TRIAL! I *WANT* TO BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR MY DEEDS!
SURE YOU DO, COBESTER.
SIDEWINDER... I'M GOING TO *GET YOU* FOR THIS, IF IT'S THE *LAST THING I DO!*
END.

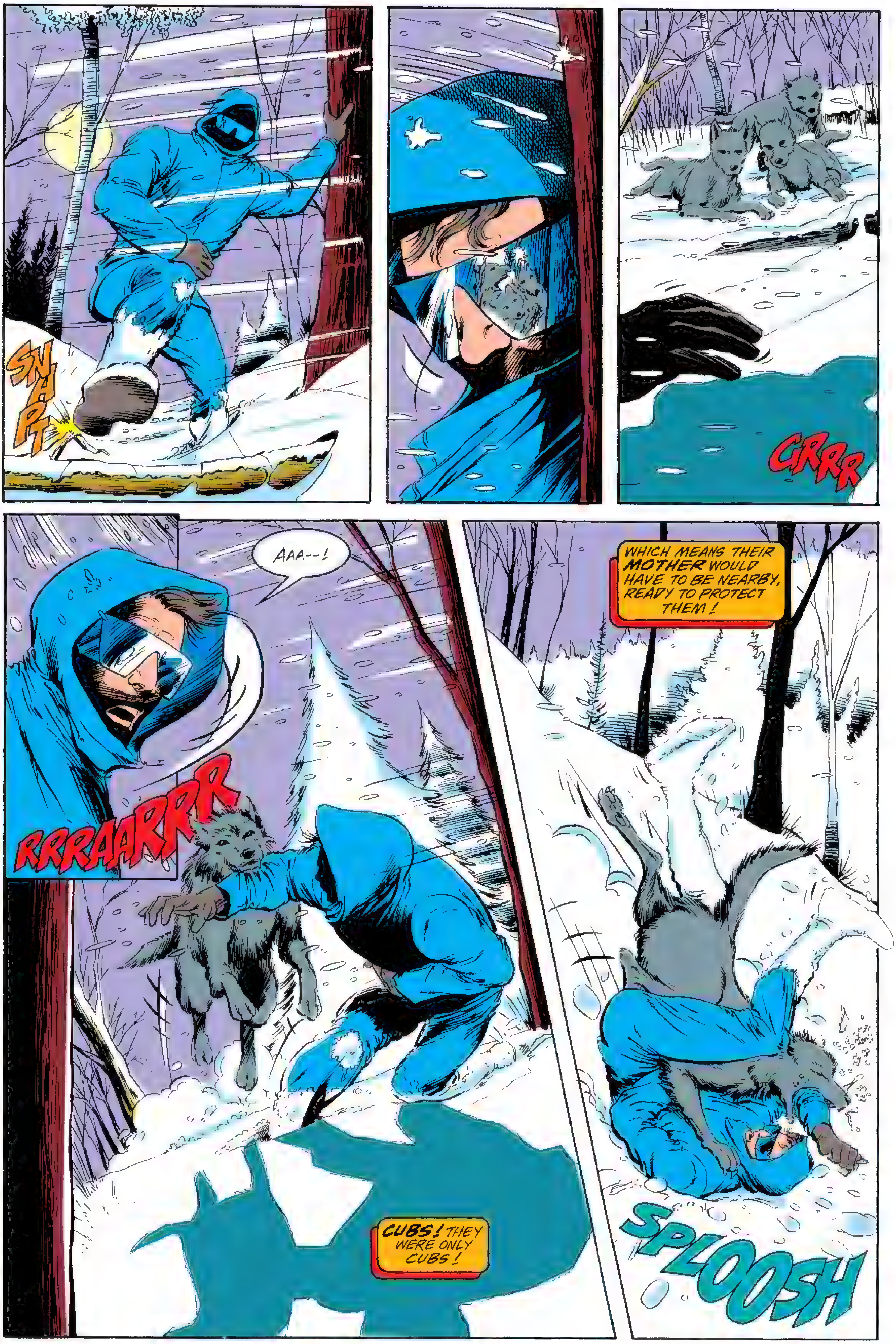

SHIK
SHIK
SHIK
SHIK
SHIK

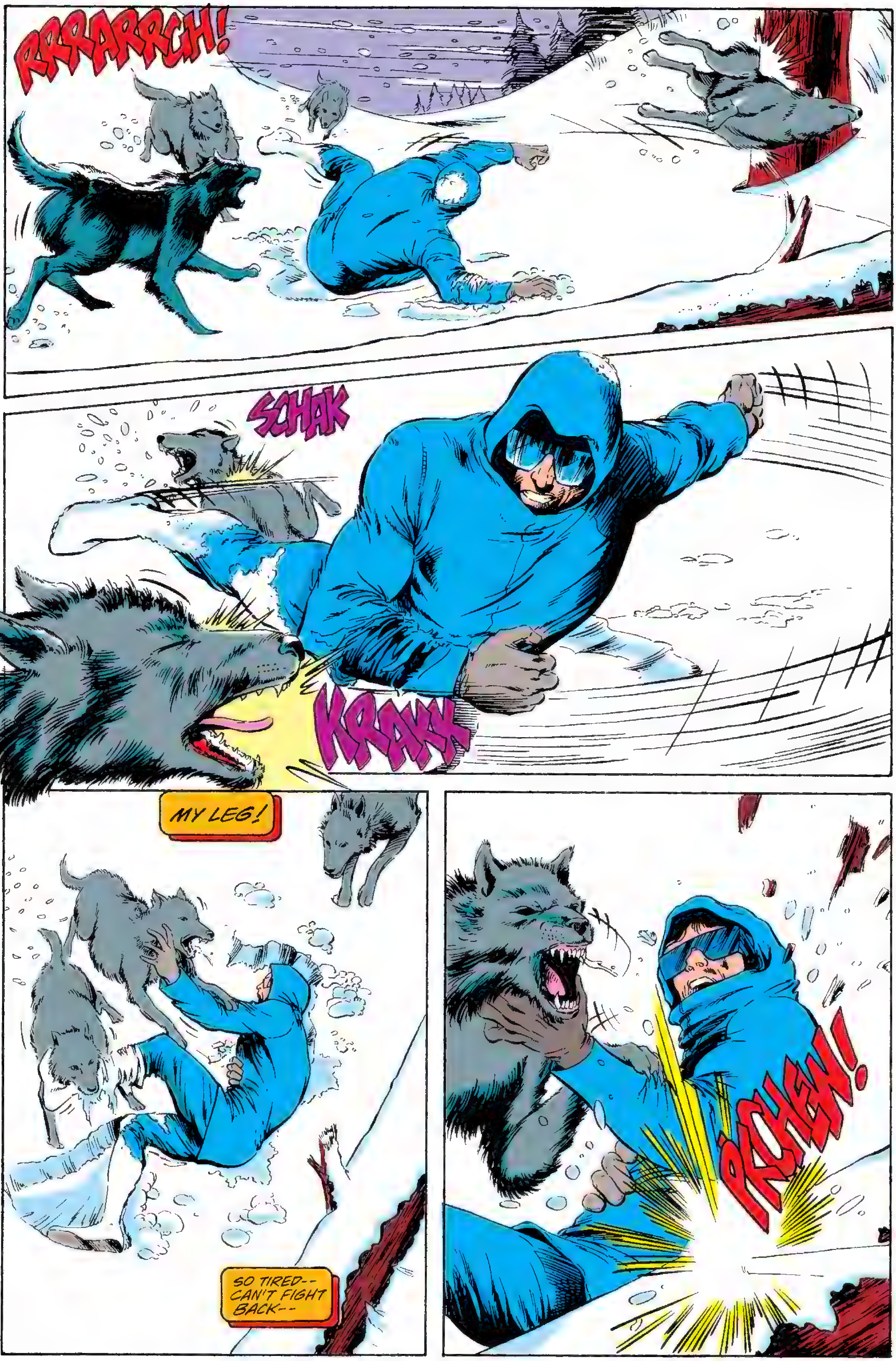
WORTH FIGHTING FOR

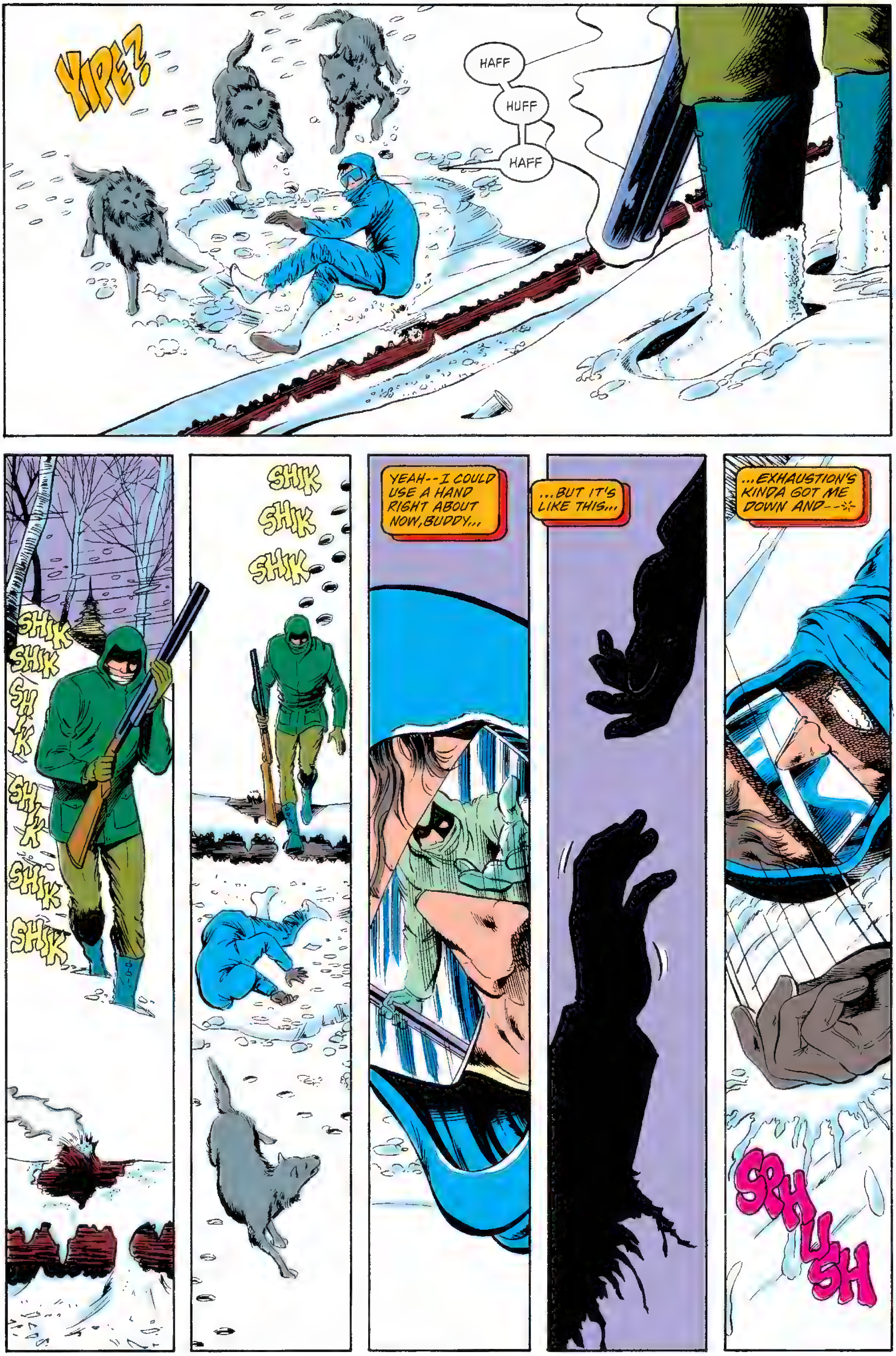
STAN LEE PRESENTS:

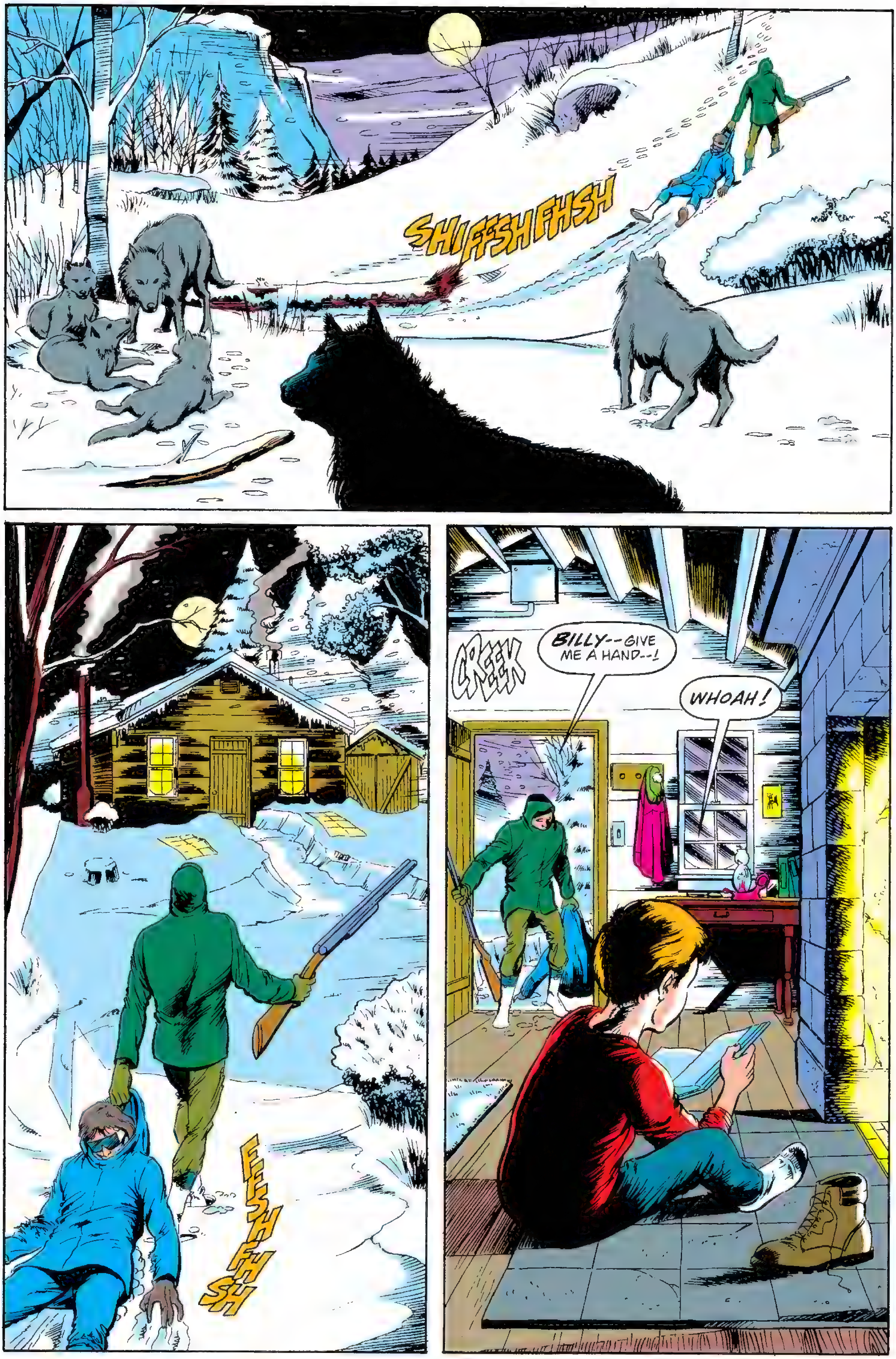
NOMAD

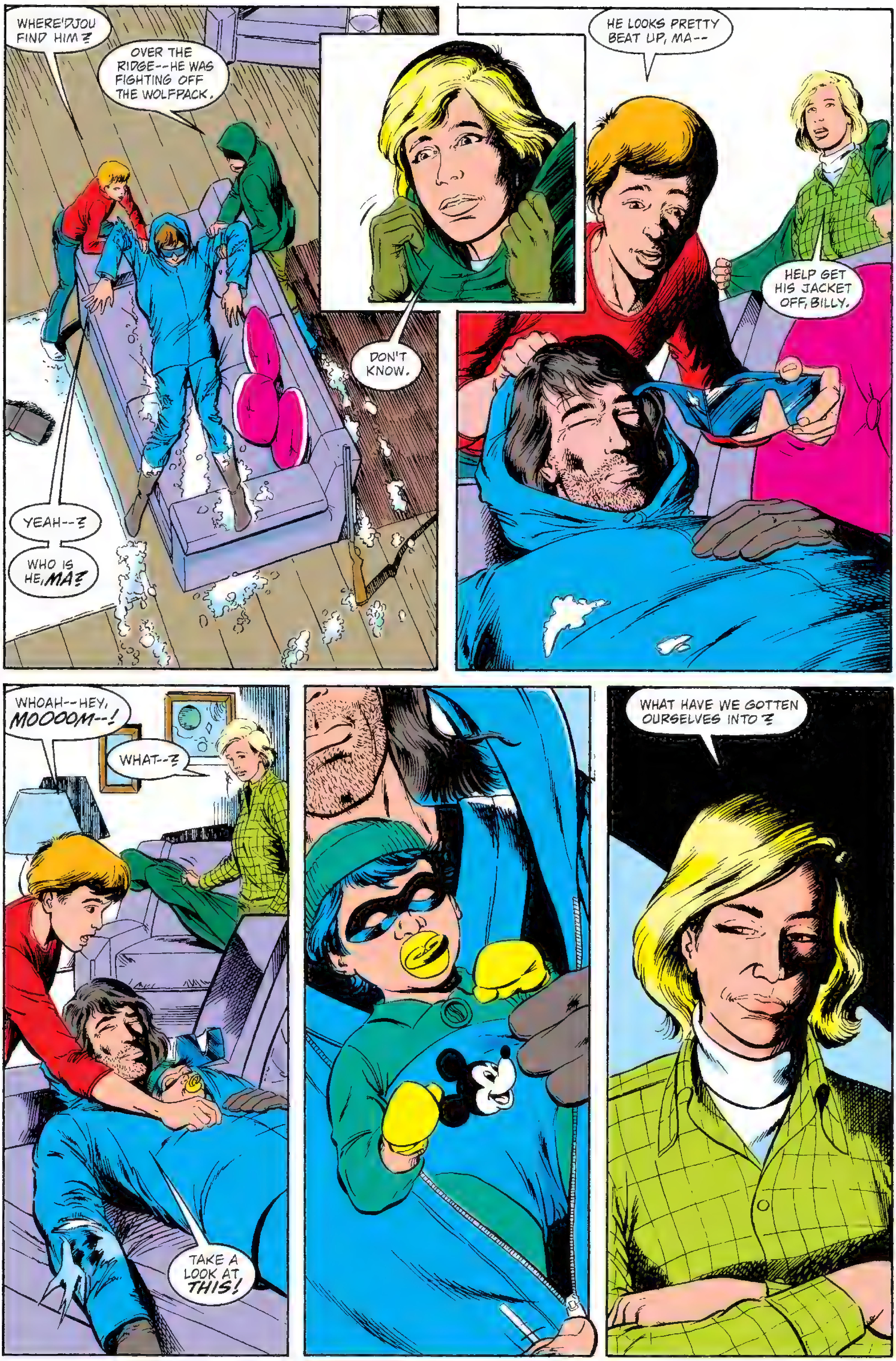
FABIAN NICIEZA
WRITER
LARRY ALEXANDER
PENCILER
TIM DZON
INKER
BRAD K. JOYCE
LETTERER
NEL YOMTOV
COLORIST

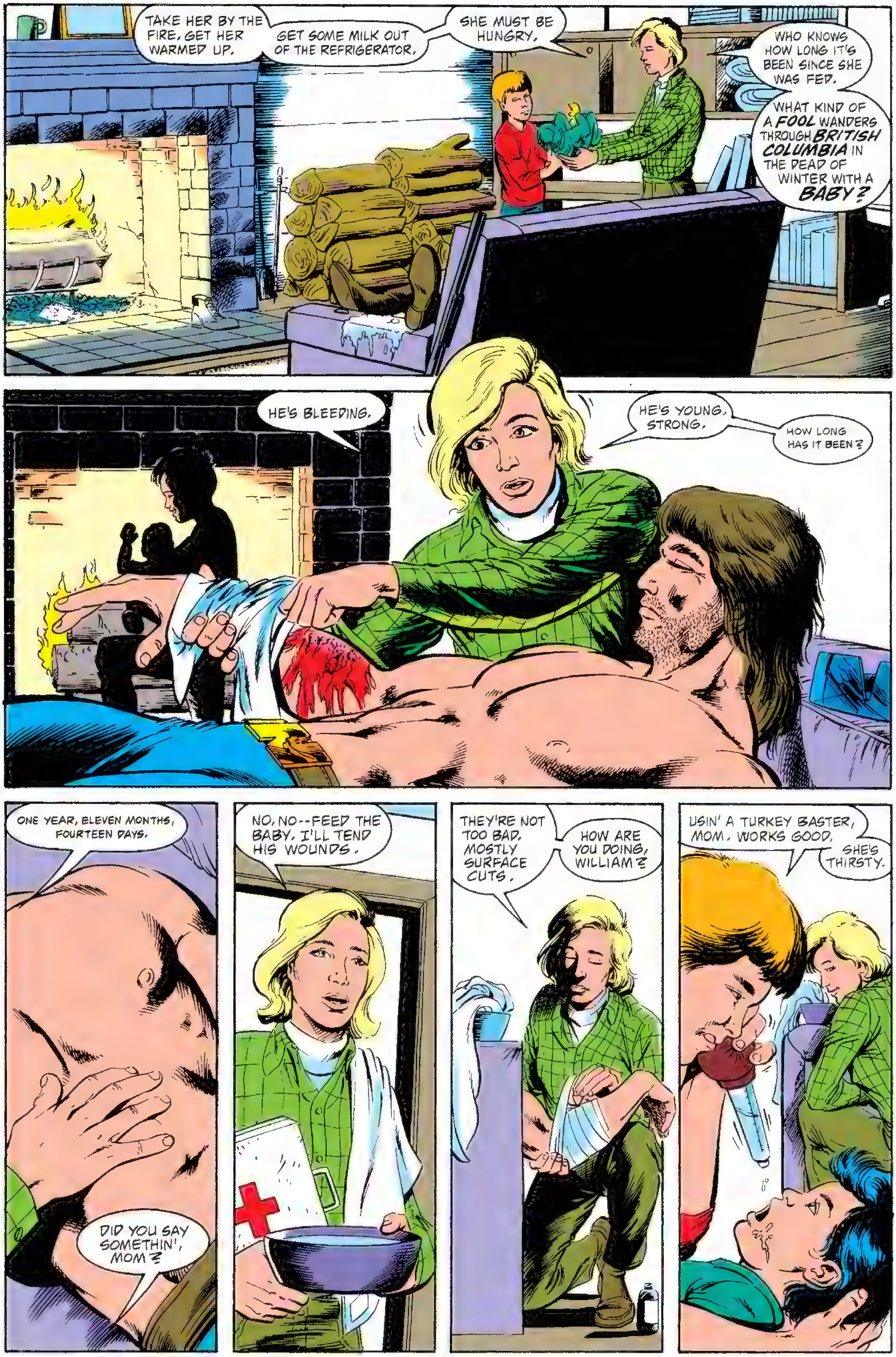

SNAPT
GRRR
AAA--!
RRRAARRR
CUBS! THEY WERE ONLY CUBS!
WHICH MEANS THEIR MOTHER WOULD HAVE TO BE NEARBY, READY TO PROTECT THEM!
SPLOOSH

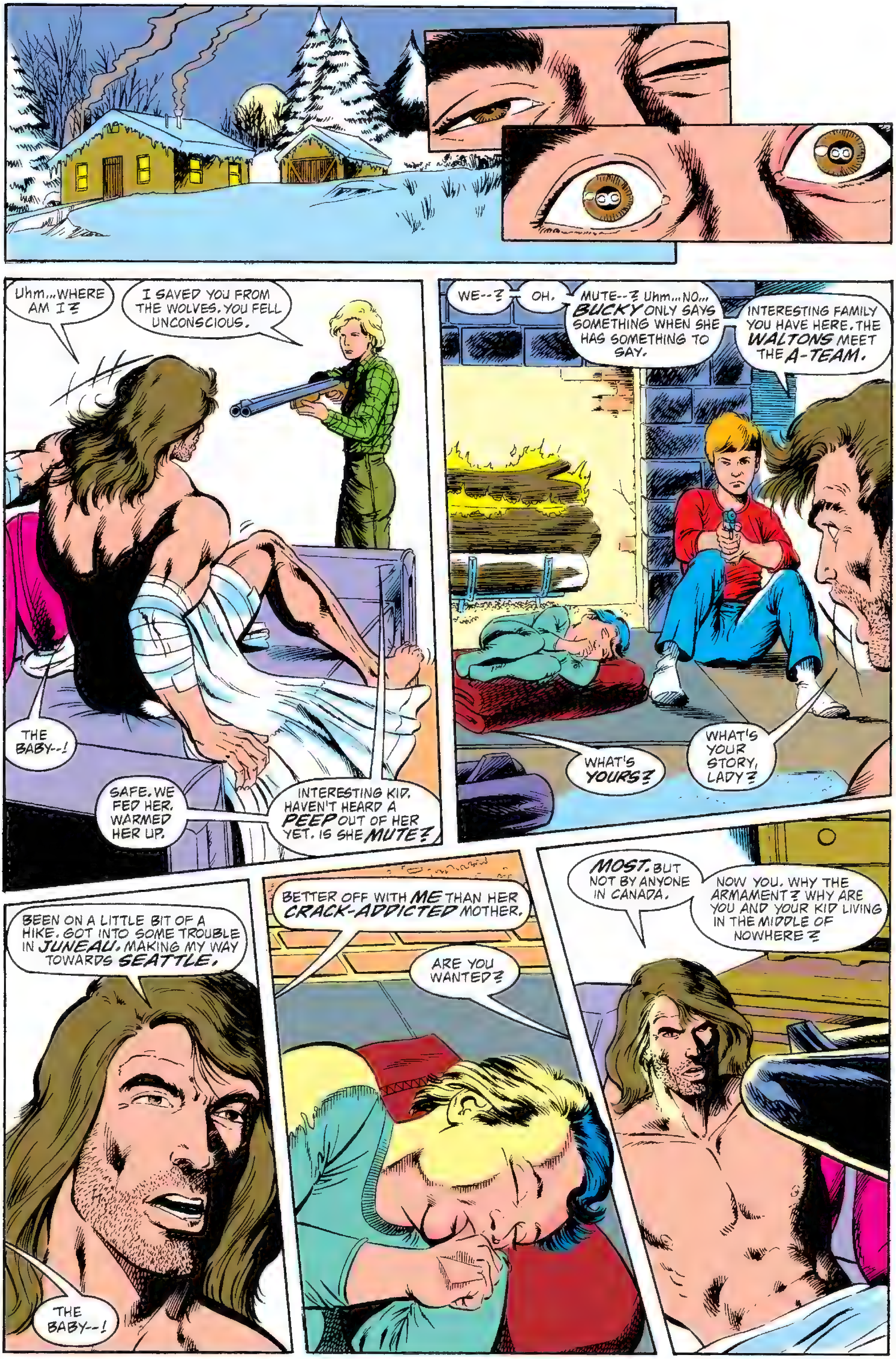

RRRARRRCH!
SCHAK
KRAKK
MY LEG!
SO TIRED-- CAN'T FIGHT BACK--
PCHEW!

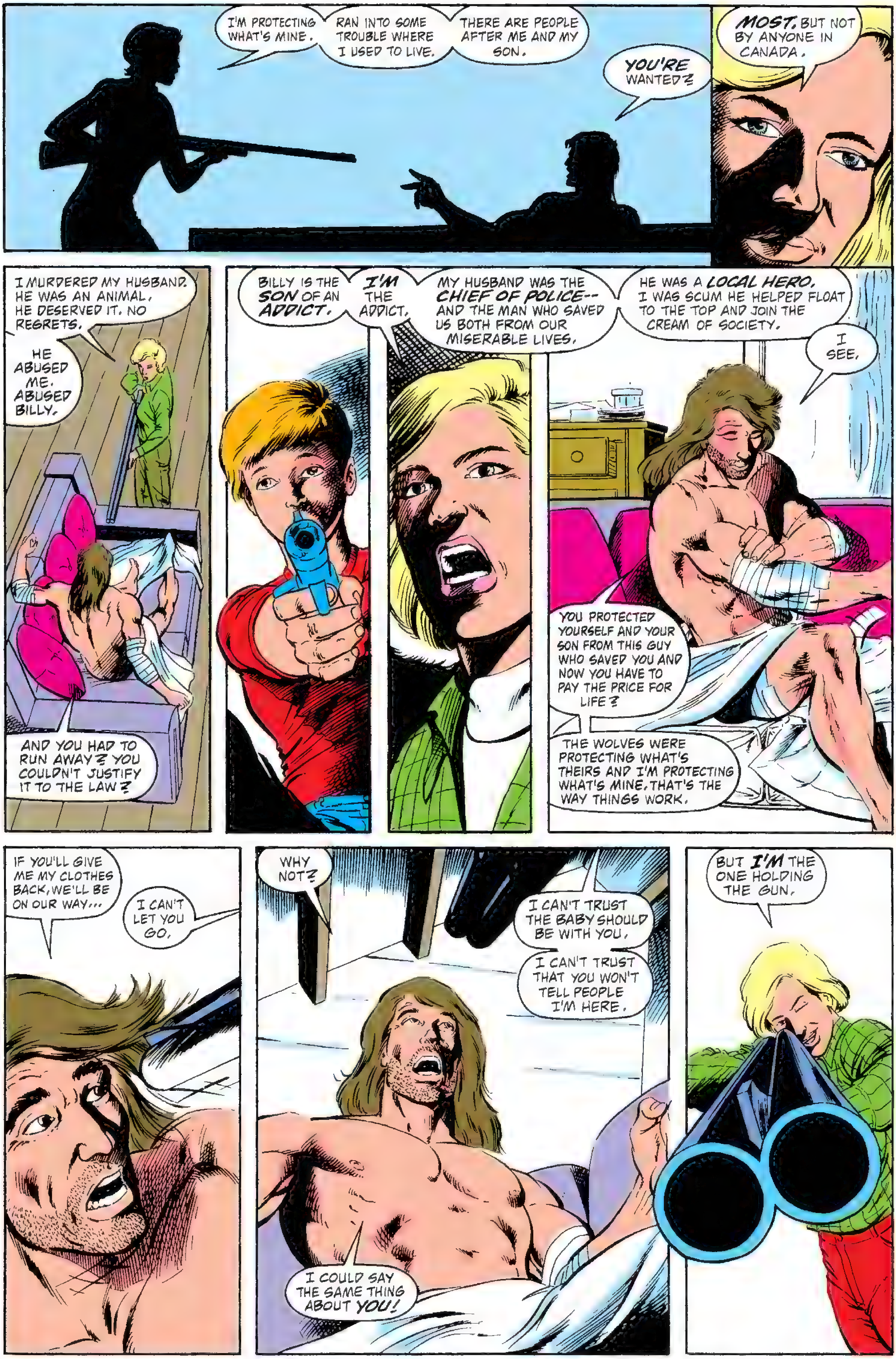

YIPE?
HAFF
HUFF
HAFF
SHIK
SHIK
SHIK
SHIK
SHIK
SHIK
SHIK
SHIK
SHIK
YEAH--I COULD USE A HAND RIGHT ABOUT NOW, BUDDY...
...BUT IT'S LIKE THIS...
...EXHAUSTION'S KINDA GOT ME DOWN AND--
SPHLUSH

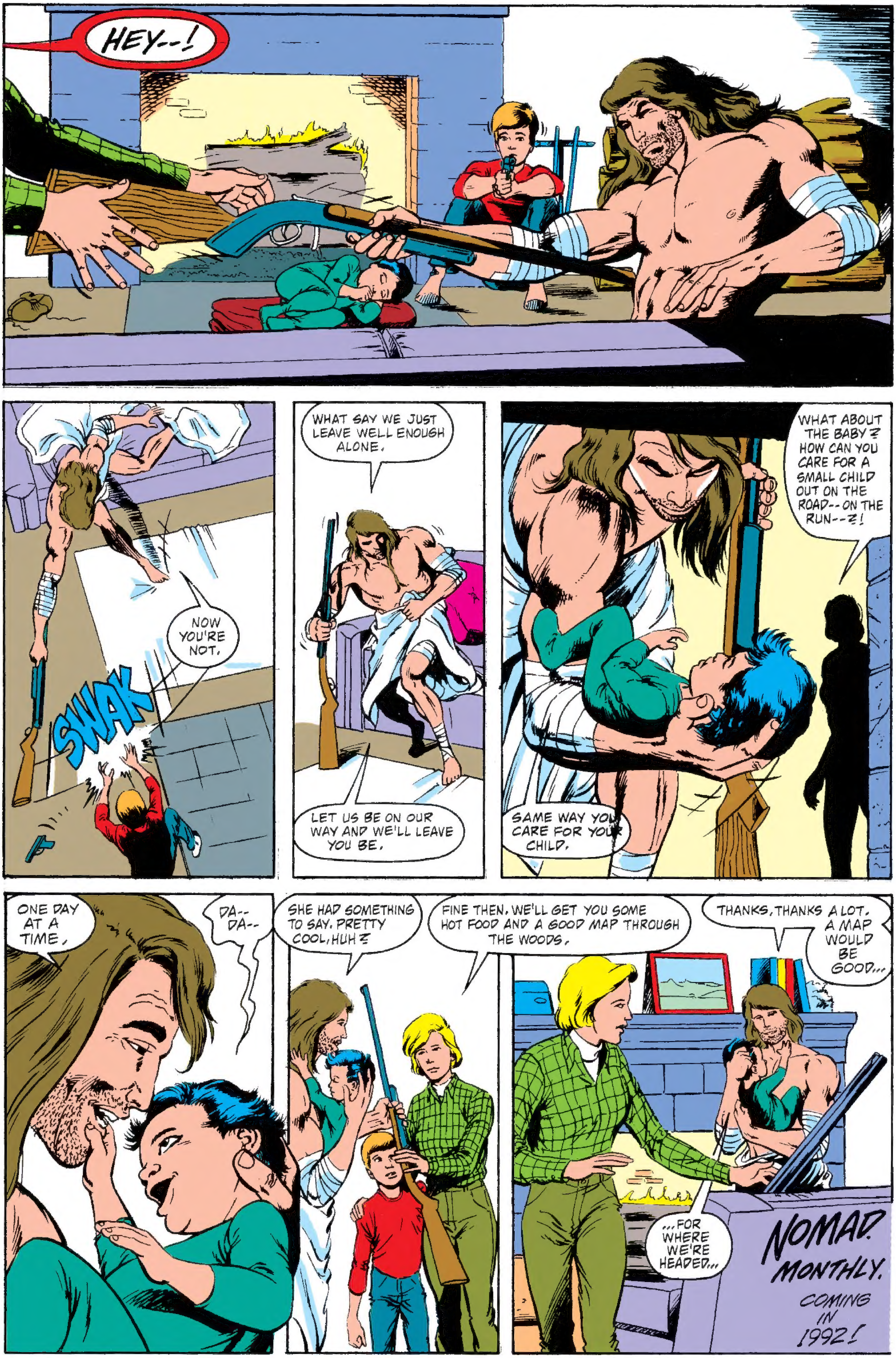

SHIFFSHFHSH
FFSHFHSH
CREEK
BILLY--GIVE ME A HAND--!
WHOAH!

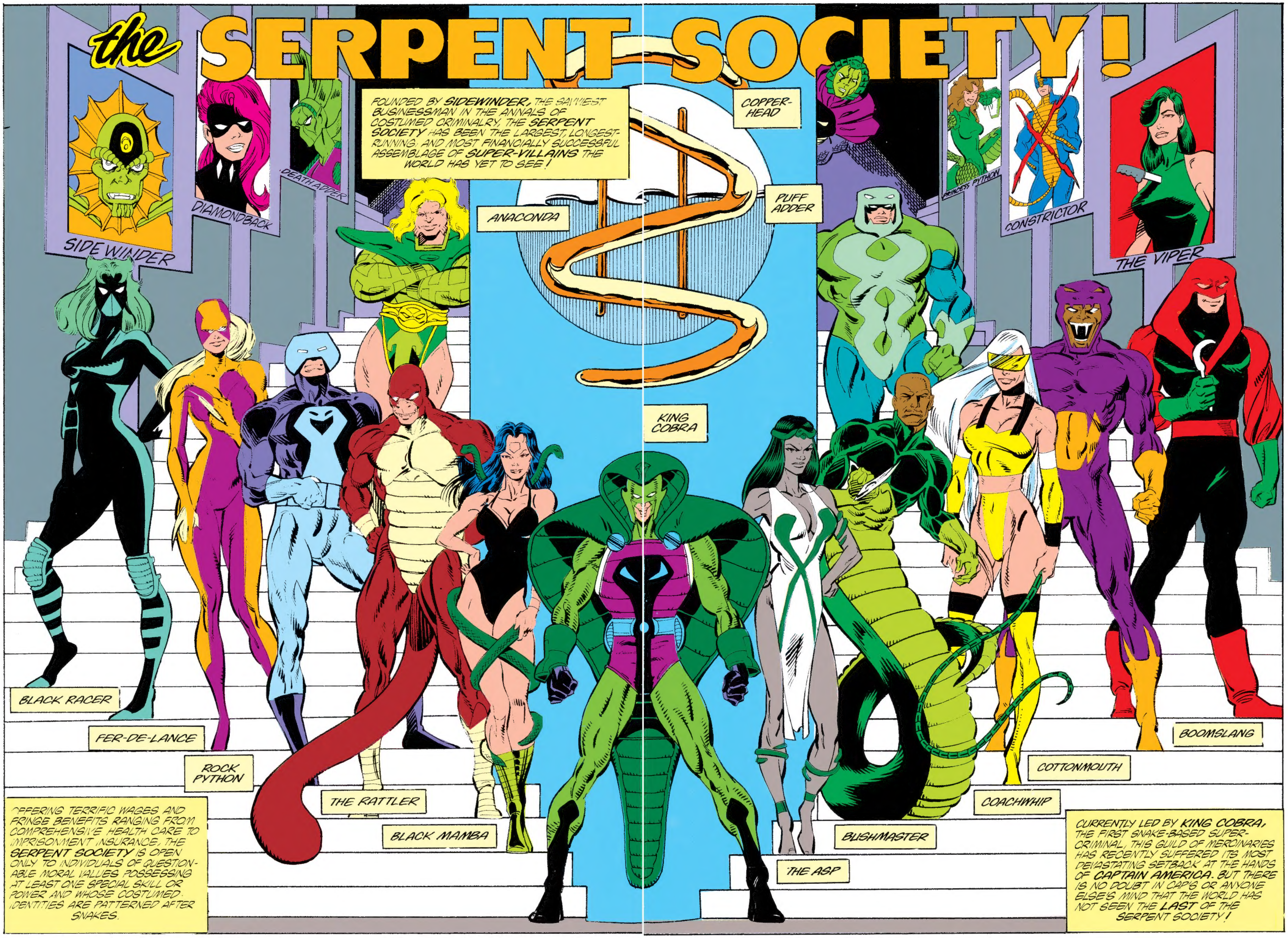

WHERE'DJOU FIND HIM?
OVER THE RIDGE--HE WAS FIGHTING OFF THE WOLFPACK.
YEAH--?
WHO IS HE, *MA?*
DON'T KNOW.
HE LOOKS PRETTY BEAT UP, MA--
HELP GET HIS JACKET OFF, BILLY.
WHOAH--HEY, ***MOOOOM--!***
WHAT--?
TAKE A LOOK AT ***THIS!***
WHAT HAVE WE GOTTEN OURSELVES INTO?

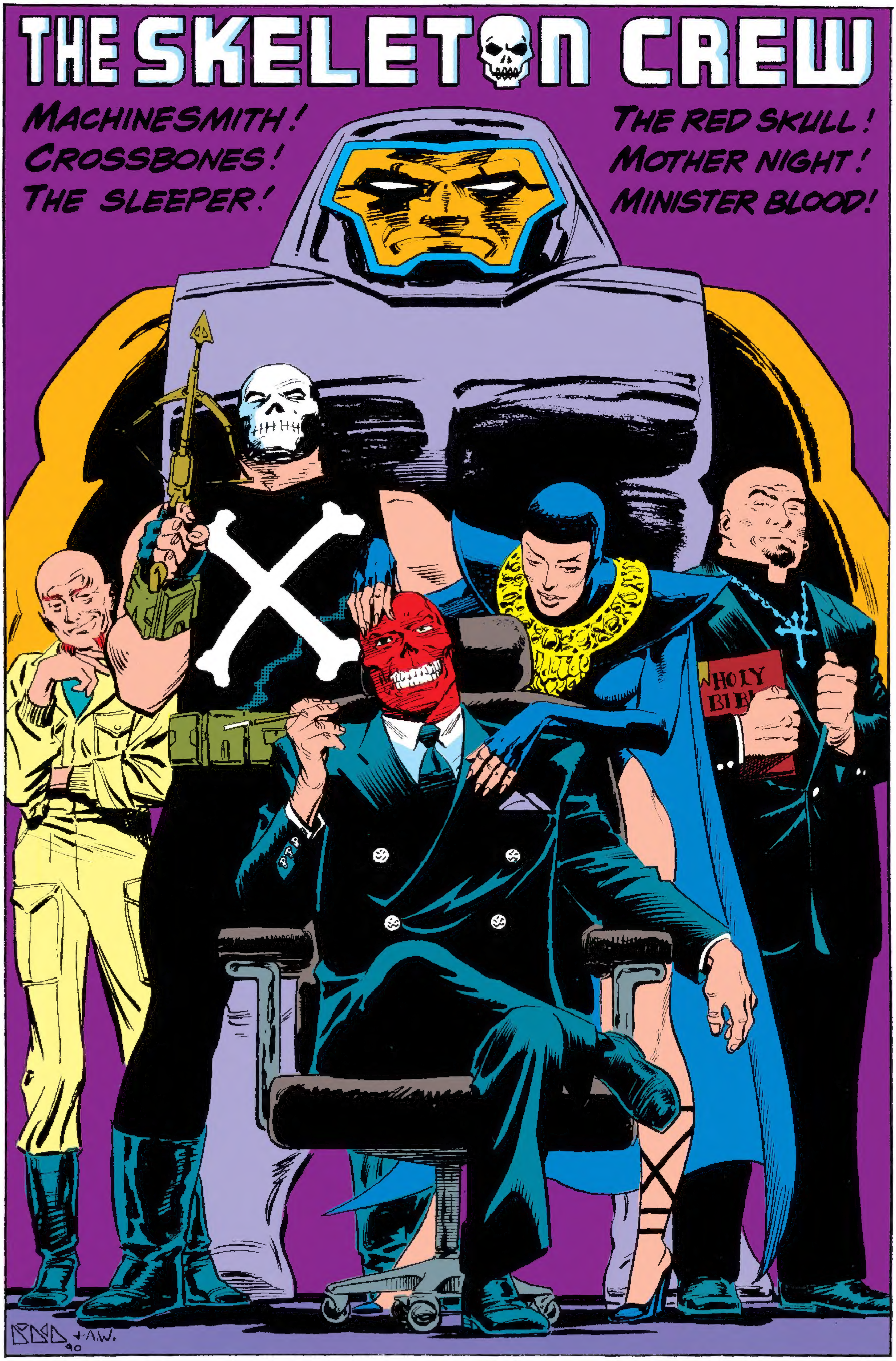

TAKE HER BY THE FIRE. GET HER WARMED UP.
GET SOME MILK OUT OF THE REFRIGERATOR.
SHE MUST BE HUNGRY.
WHO KNOWS HOW LONG IT'S BEEN SINCE SHE WAS FED.
WHAT KIND OF A FOOL WANDERS THROUGH BRITISH COLUMBIA IN THE DEAD OF WINTER WITH A BABY?
HE'S BLEEDING.
HE'S YOUNG. STRONG.
HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN?
ONE YEAR, ELEVEN MONTHS, FOURTEEN DAYS.
DID YOU SAY SOMETHIN', MOM?
NO, NO--FEED THE BABY. I'LL TEND HIS WOUNDS.
THEY'RE NOT TOO BAD. MOSTLY SURFACE CUTS.
HOW ARE YOU DOING, WILLIAM?
USIN' A TURKEY BASTER, MOM. WORKS GOOD.
SHE'S THIRSTY.


Uhm...WHERE AM I?
I SAVED YOU FROM THE WOLVES. YOU FELL UNCONSCIOUS.
THE BABY--!
SAFE. WE FED HER. WARMED HER UP.
INTERESTING KID. HAVEN'T HEARD A PEEP OUT OF HER YET. IS SHE MUTE?
WE--?
OH.
MUTE--? Uhm...NO... BUCKY ONLY SAYS SOMETHING WHEN SHE HAS SOMETHING TO SAY.
INTERESTING FAMILY YOU HAVE HERE. THE WALTONS MEET THE A-TEAM.
WHAT'S YOUR STORY, LADY?
WHAT'S YOURS?
BEEN ON A LITTLE BIT OF A HIKE. GOT INTO SOME TROUBLE IN JUNEAU. MAKING MY WAY TOWARDS SEATTLE.
THE BABY--!
BETTER OFF WITH ME THAN HER CRACK-ADDICTED MOTHER.
ARE YOU WANTED?
MOST. BUT NOT BY ANYONE IN CANADA.
NOW YOU. WHY THE ARMAMENT? WHY ARE YOU AND YOUR KID LIVING IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE?


I'M PROTECTING WHAT'S MINE.
RAN INTO SOME TROUBLE WHERE I USED TO LIVE.
THERE ARE PEOPLE AFTER ME AND MY SON.
YOU'RE WANTED?
MOST. BUT NOT BY ANYONE IN CANADA.
I MURDERED MY HUSBAND. HE WAS AN ANIMAL. HE DESERVED IT. NO REGRETS.
HE ABUSED ME. ABUSED BILLY.
AND YOU HAD TO RUN AWAY? YOU COULDN'T JUSTIFY IT TO THE LAW?
BILLY IS THE SON OF AN ADDICT.
I'M THE ADDICT.
MY HUSBAND WAS THE CHIEF OF POLICE-- AND THE MAN WHO SAVED US BOTH FROM OUR MISERABLE LIVES.
HE WAS A LOCAL HERO. I WAS SCUM HE HELPED FLOAT TO THE TOP AND JOIN THE CREAM OF SOCIETY.
I SEE.
YOU PROTECTED YOURSELF AND YOUR SON FROM THIS GUY WHO SAVED YOU AND NOW YOU HAVE TO PAY THE PRICE FOR LIFE?
THE WOLVES WERE PROTECTING WHAT'S THEIRS AND I'M PROTECTING WHAT'S MINE. THAT'S THE WAY THINGS WORK.
IF YOU'LL GIVE ME MY CLOTHES BACK, WE'LL BE ON OUR WAY...
I CAN'T LET YOU GO.
WHY NOT?
I CAN'T TRUST THE BABY SHOULD BE WITH YOU.
I CAN'T TRUST THAT YOU WON'T TELL PEOPLE I'M HERE.
I COULD SAY THE SAME THING ABOUT YOU!
BUT I'M THE ONE HOLDING THE GUN.


HEY--!
NOW YOU'RE NOT.
SWAK
WHAT SAY WE JUST LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE.
LET US BE ON OUR WAY AND WE'LL LEAVE YOU BE.
WHAT ABOUT THE BABY? HOW CAN YOU CARE FOR A SMALL CHILD OUT ON THE ROAD--ON THE RUN--?!
SAME WAY YOU CARE FOR YOUR CHILD.
ONE DAY AT A TIME.
DA-- DA--
SHE HAD SOMETHING TO SAY. PRETTY COOL, HUH?
FINE THEN. WE'LL GET YOU SOME HOT FOOD AND A GOOD MAP THROUGH THE WOODS.
THANKS. THANKS A LOT. A MAP WOULD BE GOOD...
...FOR WHERE WE'RE HEADED...
NOMAD. MONTHLY.
COMING IN 1992!


the SERPENT SOCIETY!
FOUNDED BY SIDEWINDER, THE SAVVIEST BUSINESSMAN IN THE ANNALS OF COSTUMED CRIMINALRY, THE SERPENT SOCIETY HAS BEEN THE LARGEST, LONGEST-RUNNING, AND MOST FINANCIALLY SUCCESSFUL ASSEMBLAGE OF SUPER-VILLAINS THE WORLD HAS YET TO SEE!
SIDEWINDER
DIAMONDBACK
DEATH ADDER
ANACONDA
COPPER-HEAD
PUFF ADDER
PRINCESS PYTHON
CONSTRICTOR
THE VIPER
KING COBRA
BLACK RACER
FER-DE-LANCE
ROCK PYTHON
THE RATTLER
BLACK MAMBA
THE ASP
BUSHMASTER
COACHWHIP
COTTONMOUTH
BOOMSLANG
OFFERING TERRIFIC WAGES AND FRINGE BENEFITS RANGING FROM COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CARE TO IMPRISONMENT INSURANCE, THE SERPENT SOCIETY IS OPEN ONLY TO INDIVIDUALS OF QUESTIONABLE MORAL VALUES POSSESSING AT LEAST ONE SPECIAL SKILL OR POWER AND WHOSE COSTUMED IDENTITIES ARE PATTERNED AFTER SNAKES.
CURRENTLY LED BY KING COBRA, THE FIRST SNAKE-BASED SUPER-CRIMINAL, THIS GUILD OF MERCINARIES HAS RECENTLY SUFFERED ITS MOST DEVASTATING SETBACK AT THE HANDS OF CAPTAIN AMERICA. BUT THERE IS NO DOUBT IN CAP'S OR ANYONE ELSE'S MIND THAT THE WORLD HAS NOT SEEN THE LAST OF THE SERPENT SOCIETY!


THE SKELETON CREW
MACHINESMITH!
CROSSBONES!
THE SLEEPER!
THE RED SKULL!
MOTHER NIGHT!
MINISTER BLOOD!
HOLY BIBLE

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